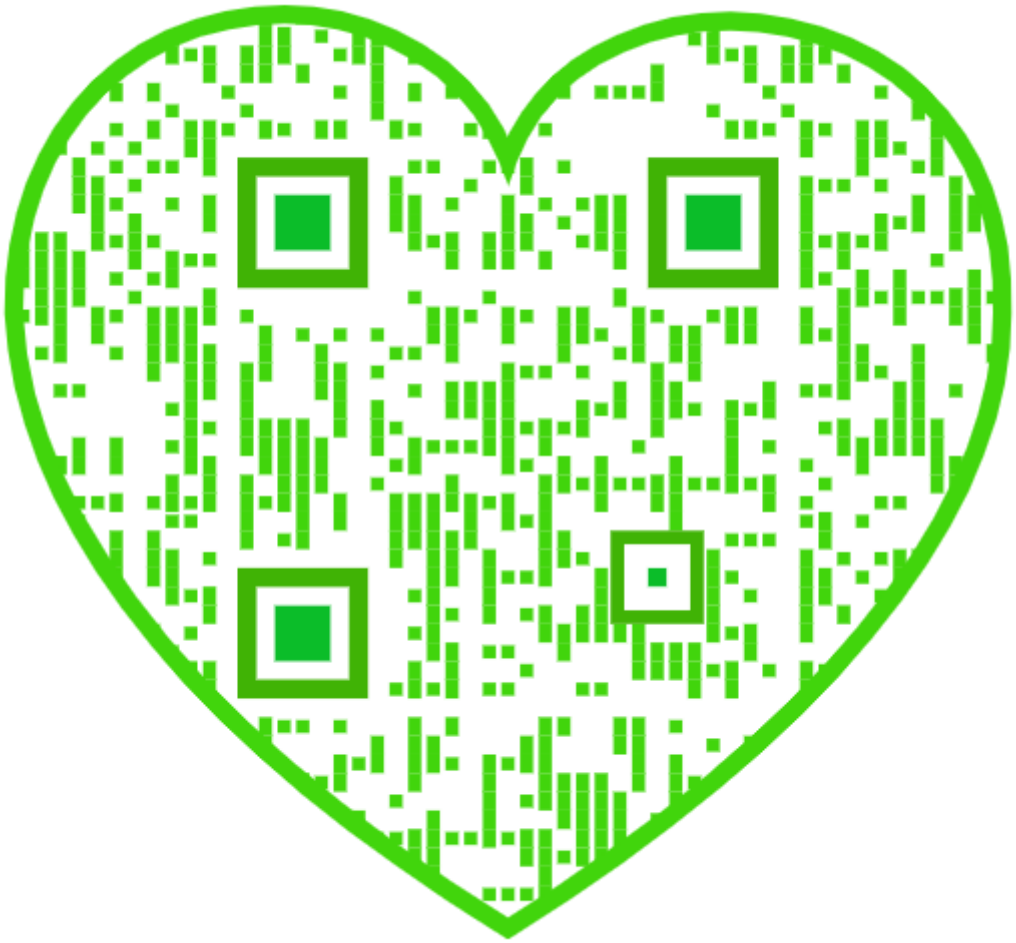

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HOW TO WRITE

FOR THE

PRESS:

A Practical Handbook for Beginners in Journalism.

BY

AN EDITOR.

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HOW TO WRITE FOR THE PRESS.

INTRODUCTION.

So numerous are the handbooks on practical journalism and authorship that the addition of yet another to the list may seem to call for a few words of explanation, if not apology.

By way of this, I would state, in the first place, that the majority of such works have been written by men whose success in the realm to which they have posed as guides has been somewhat equivocal. That is to say, men whose connection with journalism has been of the very slightest nature, men who have had no real experience of practical newspaper work, have taken upon themselves the office of giving advice to others when they themselves stood much in need of it. It is quite unnecessary to mention names in this connection, as experienced journalists are well aware of the facts. Now, for a man who has not spent years in going through the daily work of a practical journalist, and has some difficulty in getting his own contributions accepted, to offer his wisdom and counsel to the beginner in journalism is nothing less than an impertinence. The bald-headed barber who urges you to buy his hair restorer and the individual in question are near relatives.

It seems to me, therefore, that there is at least one

merit which the writer of this little book may claim—for it is the work of a practical journalist, and of one, moreover, who has found journalism not only a delightful and congenial occupation, but a not unprofitable one withal. The writer of these pages has had actual experience, extending over a goodly number of years, of reporting, sub-editing, and editing, together with a fair amount of experience as a contributor to periodicals and magazines, and he has even rejoiced his enemies by writing books. He has edited an evening paper, a bi-weekly, a morning daily, and at the present time is entrusted with the control of one of the leading weekly newspapers connected with one of the best known of provincial dailies. These facts are mentioned in no vain-glorious spirit, but are simply entered here as the author's credentials.

The reason why the author came to write the papers which form this book has already been stated by inference. So much that has previously been written on the subjects here treated has been the work of people whose title to give advice was so dubitable, or whose advice appeared to lack practicability, that he determined to approach the task in a thoroughly practical manner, and depend upon his own experience for producing a handbook that might really prove helpful to the young man or woman who was desirous of becoming a "writer for the Press," either as an occupation for leisure hours or as a means of livelihood.

That the writer has thus succeeded in some measure he is encouraged to believe, as four of the following chapters have already been published in the *Young Man*, and there they met with much acceptance,

being widely noticed by the Press and attracting especially the attention of Mr. W. T. Stead, who, in the *Review of Reviews,* heartily commended them for the saneness and practical value of their advice. The chapters in question (II., III., VIII., and IX.) are the only ones that have thus been published, and the author wishes to draw attention to the fact that his references to particular years in these chapters have been allowed to stand, as they were written before the assumption of his present editorship necessitated the discontinuance of much of his work as a contributor to other periodicals and magazines. Their value, of course, is in no wise affected by their date.

Another thing might be urged by the writer in behalf of his little book, and that is the fact that while the outside contributor to the Press has invariably been the subject of some slight attention at the hands of those who have issued primers of journalism and authorship, he has never before been the subject of a special handbook. But the literary contributor has of late become important enough and numerous enough to warrant this attention. Indeed, it seems to me that the recent cheapening of periodical literature, and its attendant demand for increased literary work, make the appearance of such a book as this distinctly opportune.

Magazine editors and the conductors of all classes of periodicals are beginning to rely less on the work of authors who have been "boomed" into, oftentimes unreal, fame. An editor who is said to have given £250 for a story by Mr. Rudyard Kipling has confessed that its appearance did not add a single copy to the circulation of his magazine. The editors of

Pearson's Magazine and the *Royal* have recently made a similar statement; and we have seen the last-named magazine, as well as the *Harmsworth*, achieve without an author of note in its pages a circulation ten times greater than any of those magazines that make a show of "big names" on their contents pages. The moral of this is plain: the capable unknown is going to have his or her chance in magazinedom, and is no longer to be swamped by writers who have managed to get their logs rolled by friendly journalists.

The field which lies open to the literary contributor will increase in the near future rather than become more circumscribed, and it is to those who contemplate entering it that this little handbook is offered, in the hope that within its pages they may find not a few hints that will save them many galling experiences, and help, perchance, to smooth the pathway to success. But I would warn, at the outset, anyone who is in a good, permanent situation, be he a draper or a druggist, not to dream of vacating that and trusting to his pen for a livelihood until he has *for several years* been able to make from literary work done after business hours an income that would be sufficient for his requirements independent of his business salary. Many a man and woman can add a very acceptable sum each year to his or her income by writing for the Press, and I am sometimes inclined to think that they are better off than those who have to depend solely upon their pens for their livelihood. They enjoy the genuine delight of literary work; it never becomes a toil to them; and they can share modestly in its rewards.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING "STYLE."

To use one's pen for the humblest literary office—the writing of a letter to a friend—is to long for the pleasure of being able to turn one's sentences with some degree of grace; to present one's thoughts in the most becoming dress. How different is the reading of a letter from one who has made some progress in this direction, compared with a letter from another who has never given a thought to literary form. Even upon the uncritical reader the subtle influence of style is not lost, and the manner of telling a story, or of describing a scene, has often interested a reader who could scarce explain why his attention was engaged.

In the wider world of literature style is essential to distinction; and no pains should be spared in its cultivation. How it may be acquired is one of those debatable questions which are always fruitful sources of discussion; just as critics have disputed for generations the teaching of the actor's art. There are those who contend that acting cannot be taught; that the actor, like the poet, cannot be the creation of academies, but must receive his tuition direct from Mother Nature; while others as stoutly maintain that the art is capable of being acquired at the hands of a competent instructor. So in regard to literary style

—which is really the kernel of literature, although it may seem to concern more the outward shell—many authorities agree with Buffon in thinking that "the style is the man," and many consider that the expenditure of time and pains, coupled with a fair endowment of native intelligence, will result in its acquirement.

Our present purpose is to examine briefly such witnesses as may be cited on the subject, and so to arrive at some intelligible idea of the factors underlying style; though it is too much to hope that we may be able to bring in a verdict which will be more definite than an opinion.

One of the greatest masters of style who have used the English language as the vehicle of their thoughts was the late Robert Louis Stevenson. He was once asked what was the secret of good literature, and he replied, "elbow-grease." "I can always tell," he said, "when an author does not write over and over again. The most rapid writer cannot arrange the mass of material that goes to make up a book without having it out of order here and there. Order is the basis, the charm, and the end of literature. Therefore, the main point is to be certain that you have everything in proper order." Stevenson then proceeded to give us a glimpse of the scrupulous methods by which he sought after perfect form: "Only this morning I was reading over the manuscript of a scene in a story, when I found out it was not true to nature. I could not follow the idea. It would not join on. But after gloomily reading and re-reading it over four or five times I detected the flaw. An act of one of the characters had come before something else, and

rendered his subsequent conduct impossible. If, in literature, a man has every word, and every sentence, and every subject in the right order, and has no other gift, he will be a great writer. His clauses may be unmusical, his words colourless and inexpressive, and yet, if the order is perfect throughout, he will be a great writer."

It would thus seem that, to Stevenson's mind, order and style were synonymous; but this is a proposition which few will accept; though none will deny that order is an attribute of style. If order alone were style, then Euclid would surely be the greatest stylist who ever put pen to paper. None knew better than Stevenson, however, that style required a great deal more than order. As Lord Rosebery has said of him, he "played the sedulous ape" to many distinguished writers with a view to forming a literary style. He tried to reproduce their qualities, and was again and again unsuccessful; "but at least," he confessed, "in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, and construction, and co-ordination of parts." We would be correct, therefore, in regarding Stevenson as a witness in favour of reading and imitation as means to the acquirement of style.

An old writer (*Dublin University Magazine*, 1852) claimed Dickens on the side of those who had evolved their styles from other writers. "Boz," wrote this critic, "has achieved a great thing—he has created a style. The singular circumstance in this case is that, by careful study of previous styles, by imitation of them, this author has produced out of the heterogeneous elements a compound essentially

differing from all its component parts, and claiming —claiming justly—the high merit of being original. That such a result should follow such a course ought to encourage writers who aim at true celebrity to adopt this humble and painstaking initiatory system." Mr. George Holyoake thinks that of all the bewildering ways of acquiring style this is the worst. According to him, a man might as well expect to create a new scent by mixing together the most remarkable perfumes he could collect, as to create a new style by fusing the characteristics of a dozen distinguished authors.

Be that as it may, there are many eminent authors who urge the value of wide reading, and even conscious imitation for a time. Mr. Justin McCarthy favours the study of Shakespeare, Addison, Steele, Johnson, and Burke, and the Greek and Latin authors. Mr. Andrew Lang, who believes that "reading and writing come by nature," and confesses that he never cultivated style—though some esteem him the first stylist of the day—thinks Thackeray, Fielding, and Swift are about the best modern English authors for young persons to read, so far as manner goes. Mr. Grant Allen attaches much importance to the study of the classics; though Mr. Baring-Gould does not lay much stress on that. He thinks that the best training for good writing is the reading and copying out of long passages from the old masters. French, in Mr. Baring-Gould's opinion, helps one to think and express oneself compactly, and German is a caution against involution of sentences. The late Mrs. Lynn Linton also believed in studying good models simply for the sake of their method.

The English poets have been Mr. Robert Buchanan's

"best and only guides" as to how to utter his thoughts. The late William Black would have set beginners in literature to the close study of Tennyson and Thackeray. Mr. Augustine Birrell says: "Never let a day pass without reading a really good bit of English—an essay by Addison or Arnold, a sermon by Newman or Spurgeon, one of Cobbett's Rural Rides, or a letter of Cowper's." Dr. Samuel Smiles thinks the words of the Bible are the best and most straightforward, though Addison, Hume, and Green ("The History of England"), Goldsmith ("Vicar of Wakefield"), and Bacon's essays are excellent.

In studying the great masters, and in playing the sedulous ape for a period of novitiate, one is warned by all who advise such methods, not to degenerate into a mere copyist; not to subordinate one's own individuality and inclinations to those of the chosen masters, but simply to accept the latter as guides and examples, taking suggestions from them, culling a flower of phrase here and there for the enrichment of one's vocabulary. Mr. Oswald Crawfurd tells of a terrible case in this connection. "I know a very brilliant man of letters," he says, and one can fancy the whispered horror with which the tale was told, "I know a very brilliant man of letters who has ruined his style, and immensely lessened his influence, because in his youth he was an enthusiastic admirer of Carlyle's writings, and formed his style on his." How awful! Let the young author be warned in time; avoid Carlyle like poison—as a model of style, at all events. I have never been aware that Mr. Crawfurd might himself be considered anything of a stylist, and yet he tells us that he has studied for that

purpose Dryden, Defoe, Swift, Bacon, Berkley, Jeremy Taylor, Barrow, and Goldsmith. So much for those who advise the novice to study and copy, and profit by, the styles of the great writers.

Mr. Hall Caine thinks that without a natural ear for the music of words no great prose, as well as no great verse, was ever written. The author of "The Manxman" regards his newspaper training as the most potential in developing such style as his writings may be said to possess. "The real turning point," he says, "was the time when I had to write in great haste for a daily paper. Having to dictate a leading article was a sore tax on my arts of self-mystification in labyrinths of words, and a simpler style grew necessary by the very method of production. Short, sharp, pithy sentences took the place of long and windy ones, and I realised that I was a better writer."

Mr. A. J. C. Hare also agrees with Mr. Hall Caine in thinking that it is a question of ear. "But nothing can be written in an *interesting* way by a person who does not feel with his subject." There is no doubt that the ear is an important factor in guiding one's style in composition, and there is no better test of a written sentence than to read it aloud. For this reason those authors who dictate acquire a smooth-flowing, well-rounded style more readily than those who rely directly on their own pen for transmitting their thoughts to paper. But ear is not all; just as order is not all; the one may be pleased and the other observed, and yet style in its truest sense may be altogether lacking. For, though grace of expression and harmony of ideas may be attained by the expenditure of pains, the subtle charm which

gives to writing its distinctive value must be inborn, just as the individuality of the actor is the measure of his eminence in his art.

There is quite a cloud of witnesses in favour of the proposition that style is largely a gift. Dr. George Macdonald thinks that "every true man with anything to say has a style of his own, which, for its development requires only common sense. In the first place, he must see that he has said what he means; in the next, that he has not said it so that it may be mistaken for what he does not mean. The mere moving of a word to another place may help to prevent such mistake. Then he must remove what is superfluous, what is unnecessary or unhelpful to the understanding of his meaning." The effort after style, in Dr. Macdonald's opinion, ought to be but a removing of faults. "Say, and then say right," is his dictum.

Mr. Bret Harte also agrees with Buffon in thinking that the style is the man; though he believes that his early experience as a humble journalist, who had to set up the type of his own articles, and to save labour, transferred his thoughts direct to his "composing stick," had something to do with condensing his style. Mr. George Moore confesses that he never gave a thought to style; his reading was entirely unregulated, and when he was five-and-twenty he could not distinguish between a verb and a noun, nor punctuate a sentence. So no tyro need despair. Mark Twain is aware of no methods by which he might be said to have cultivated style. Doubtless he has methods, he says, but they begot themselves, in which case he is "only their proprietor, not their father."

Mr. R. D. Blackmore thinks that a good deal depends upon luck as well as care; Mr. Clark Russell is of opinion that a good style follows a good sense; "a writer's style," says Mr. Thomas Hardy, "is according to his temperament, and my impression is that if he has anything to say which is of value, and words to say it with, the style will come of itself;" while Mr. Edmund Gosse considers that style is properly an inborn faculty, "like the other imaginative arts, to be trained, chastened, and expanded by labour if it exists in the nature, but not to be implanted in a barren ground by all the master-pieces in all the literature of the world." Allingham, the Irish lyric poet, seems to express very neatly the consensus or critical opinion in these lines :—

> Not like Homer would I write,
> Not like Dante if I might,
> Not like Shakespeare at his best,
> Not like Goethe or the rest;
> Like myself, however small,
> Like myself, or not at all.

But to write like one's self does not mean to sit down and scribble away without purpose or design. In taking infinite pains with one's work, greater justice is done to oneself; and, although first thoughts are generally the best, the first way of expressing them is not always the clearest, or the most graceful. Balzac, the greatest of French novelists, did not begrudge a whole week to a page, and the poet Gray wrote with similar care and fastidiousness. Of Thackeray's style a contemporary says: "It was the result of the most careful and discriminating study." Wilkie Collins was another very careful and slow

writer; he would spend hours upon a page. Tasso's manuscripts, now preserved, are nearly illegible from the number of the corrections; and a page of Pope's translation of Homer is said to look as if the traditional spider had wandered across it. When Pascal was at work on "Provençal Letters," he frequently devoted three weeks to a single page. Some of the letters he recommenced seven or eight times. Hume was always correcting—each new edition differing from the preceding.

The late Professor Huxley wrote in reply to a correspondent who put a question to him in regard to the subject in hand: "If there is any merit in my English now, it is due to the fact that I have by degrees become awake to the importance of the three conditions of good writing which I have mentioned. (To ape no one; to take infinite pains; to be loyal to truth.) I have learned to spare no labour upon the process of acquiring clear ideas—to think nothing of writing a page four or five times over if nothing less will bring the words which express all I mean, and nothing more than I mean; and to regard rhetorical verbosity as the deadliest and most degrading of literary sins."

"John Strange Winter" tells how hard she worked to master the art of literary expression. Many a time she has written a story eight or nine times over before she has been satisfied with it. "I used to take a novel of Wilkie Collins," she writes, "and pick the sentences to pieces, note the crisp, concise style of them, and get them into my head, so to speak. Then I would go at my own work, never using a long word when I could find a short one

to answer the same purpose; never using a Latin word when I could find a Saxon one to express the same meaning; never using two adjectives where one would do, or one at all when it could be avoided; never describing dress if I could help it; never using a French word unless impossible to find the same meaning in English, and never quoting bits of poetry unless really necessary."

Dr. Samuel Smiles thinks that the example of Franklin was excellent, to read over a paper in the *Spectator* thoroughly, and then try to put it in language of his own. Professor Dowden says: "In writing narrative, which I have had some practice in, I believe the most important thing is to discover, and then conceal, a logic, a rational order in the sequence, of topics. A mass of incident has to be set forth, and the great art is to convert what is merely chronological into a rational sequence, where one thing leads on to another as it were by natural associations. When one has picked out the facts, separated them into groups, and decided on the order in which the groups shall succeed one another, the thing is really done. When I say logic, perhaps I mean, in many cases, a logic of the emotions rather than of the intellect."

It is interesting to know that Mr. George Meredith lays great stress on the necessity of avoiding obscurity. This may tempt some critics to say, "Physician, heal thyself." Mr. Grant Allen emphasises the need for patience and work. "I never write even a newspaper article now," he says, "without going over it three or four times, looking for faults, strengthening sentences, substituting strong or vivid adjectives for weak ones,

and putting picturesque verbs in the place of the verb to be and other feeblenesses. I go over separately for various specific defects, and, last of all, satisfy my ear as to the ring of each separate sentence. Labour — incessant labour, gives the appearance of ease."

The advice of Mr. Christie Murray is eminently sensible and easy of acceptance. "To try to be striking, new, fine, is all faulty," he writes. "Try to see clearly, to speak justly, and you are on the road to a style. Idiom is the cream of language. Use common forms for thoughts which have often been expressed. I remember one man saying of another that he never clothed a modicum of meaning in a long array of misapplied polysyllables: an excellent example of the vice he said his friend was free from. Avoid foreign phrases and scraps of the dead languages. There is nothing which can be said at all which cannot be said in English."

Touching contemporary style in general, Mr. Craik, in a capital introduction to his "English Prose Selections," sets down the opinion that the bulk of it is, at least, alive. "It moves lightly and easily," he writes; "it aims at a colloquial familiarity which, as we must not forget, is one of the earliest and truest characteristics of the genius of the language. It is undoubtedly often slipshod and ambiguous, and the so-called ornaments often amount to little more than vague rhodomontade which has all the vices of a spurious coinage. But, as we may see more than once in the history of our prose, false ornament, however distasteful, is, on the whole, a better and more healthy sign than no ornament at all. A prose

style which moves too timidly, and fears all that is gorgeous lest it become tawdry, and all that is strenuous lest it become exaggerated, soon becomes afraid of its own shadow, and ceases to move at all. No prose can have in it the instinct of life and vigour which does not to a large extent repeat the tone, and catch, in a certain measure, the current fashion of expression of its own day."

This is an admirable definition of literary style. Literature must bespeak the spirit of the time; the style of to-day must differ materially from that of a century ago, as it will from that of a century hence. Writers ought to put nerves into their productions; they should seek to interpret in their writings the genius of the age as it indicates itself in language; always avoiding undue familiarity and slang where that is merely vulgar without being expressive.

To sum up, we may take it that the three things which should first be aimed at are accuracy, clearness, and grace. To be accurate is to have one's facts well marshalled and verified; to be clear is to convey to the reader all that is necessary for him to know, choosing just the words which will most precisely suggest to him the thought in the author's mind and the value which the latter places upon it; to be graceful is to select sweet-sounding words, to turn sentences neatly, varying their length in accordance with the thought with which they may be freighted, and never to use an ugly, harsh expression where a pleasanter one may be found. In striving after these things the individuality of the writer will unconsciously assert itself, and thus produce a style at once distinctive and cultivated.

CHAPTER II.

CHOOSING A SUBJECT.

To the beginner in journalism the initial difficulty lies in the choice of a subject. But this is a difficulty which disappears with a little experience; the young writer soon discovers that the point of first importance is his subject, and so devotes chief consideration to that. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the subject of an article is not even more important—from a purely journalistic point of view—than its treatment. And this must be obvious, since the newspaper reader is first attracted to an article not by any elegance of style, or perspicuousness of reasoning, but by the nature of its subject. A contribution might be written with all the polish which a scholarly journalist could give to it, and it might be a very model of treatment so far as clarity of argument were concerned, but if it did not deal with some topic calculated to interest the reader and attract his attention, it would be of no more use as "copy"—or, rather, of less value—than a budget of interesting clippings from other newspapers. This is the first thing the young contributor has to learn: that before he puts pen to paper he must select some subject which is likely to interest newspaper readers. And in doing this he has to bear in mind that what interests him may not interest them; so that in order to arrive at a true

estimate of newspaper requirements he must study the contents of the different periodicals of the day. This may seem rather a large order, considering the thousands of publications which issue from the press of the United Kingdom every week; but it is surprising how a judicious survey of contemporary periodicals may give one a good idea of the public requirements, and how easily that can be made.

The press may be roughly divided into four classes. First, there is the newspaper proper, viz., the daily and weekly journals in which "news" is the first essential; second, the "popular" weekly press; third, the monthly magazines; and fourth, the trade and class journals. All these offer many inducements to the occasional contributor, and I shall consider them in the order given, when treating of the character of the contributions which are most likely to find acceptance by their editors. But let me here remark that a very moderate amount of industry and no great intellectual gifts are necessary for one to acquaint oneself with the requirements of the press when so divided. With the contents of the daily newspaper everyone is familiar, and the occasional investment of a penny in sample copies of the popular weekly periodicals is all that need be done in order to gain some idea of their contents; while the monthly magazines, such as the *Strand*, the *Windsor*, and the *Royal*, may be similarly studied by the watchful eye; the "trade" journals being, like most class publications, the easiest of all to fit with contributions.

What kind of contributions, then, does the newspaper press require? What subjects are likely to

be acceptable? The daily and weekly newspapers cover a range that is practically without limit. They are the Whiteleys of journalism. Everything, from the literary needle to the literary anchor, is supplied by them; they are truly the universal literary providers. It would therefore be absurd to attempt to specify the subjects which one should treat who desires admittance to their columns; but there is one infallible rule which must always be recognised by those who aim at securing a footing amongst the contributors to the newspaper press: their subjects must be of current interest, and must concern things which will be in the public mind, or before the eye of the public, when the articles are to be published. The newspaper is the child of the flying day, and it must bring its readers into touch with every topic of interest day by day, else its career will be short. Every editor, when he sits down at his desk to think out his next issue, is positively thirsting for material which will make it of the greatest interest to the greatest number of his readers, and if to-morrow some important event is to occur, something that will be talked about in the club or in the drawing-room, and some energetic contributor has sent him an article bearing on this, or touching some kindred subject, if the article be written in good English and have a modicum of common sense in its treatment, the chances are ten to one that the editor will pass it for publication, while he may return to its author a very superior essay on something that had happened two or three weeks previously.

This is because the first essential of newspaper articles is that they must deal with some topic of the

moment. Now, scarcely a week passes without several important questions occupying prominent places in the news columns of the daily and weekly papers, and it is safe to say that on all such questions editors are only too anxious to receive special contributions and to pay for them. A wide field is thus open to the occasional contributor, and one which may be cultivated with a fair amount of profit.

Let us suppose some difficulty has arisen between the Government of Great Britain and that of, say, Liberia, the queer little negro republic of West Africa, and the Liberians are threatening to blow the British Empire to pieces (as, no doubt, they imagine they could if they tried); well, here is a chance for the industrious compiler to hunt up all the information he can find with reference to Liberia and the Liberians, and to put together some articles on the subject, which will be most acceptable to newspaper editors, always provided they are written in decent English. If one has some personal experience of Liberia, and can relate something about the place at first hand, so much the better; or, equally good, if one knows somebody, or can be introduced to somebody, who has been to the country and can supply some interesting facts about it, do not fail to interview him at once, and serve up the "copy" so obtained without loss of time. It is true, of course, that we have not disputes with Liberia very often; but it is astonishing how many similar questions crop up every year.

The year 1897 was overshadowed by the Diamond Jubilee, which proved a veritable Aaron's rod so far as journalistic interest was concerned; yet there were numerous good subjects going a-begging. The Greek

war was full of endless possibilities, and happening at a time when there was a revival of interest in the works of Lord Byron, the present writer made use of the occasion to "place" quite a series of Byron papers: "Byron and Greece," "At Byron's Grave," "A Visit to Newstead Abbey," "A Contribution to Byroniana," to mention the titles of several. He was also the first to turn the appointment of the American Ambassador into copy with an article in the *Echo* on "Colonel John Hay's Poetry;" while the erection of a memorial to Mrs. Siddons at Paddington Green furnished the peg on which to hang another special for the same newspaper, for which, among many other articles, he wrote, "How Ocean Cables are Laid," the subject being suggested by the announcement that the Commission on the projected all-British Pacific cable had reported to Government. The war and rumours of war in the early part of the year suggested "The Cost of War," an article written for *Tit-Bits*, and subsequently widely circulated by the Peace Society, having also attracted the attention of Ouida. The Klondike discoveries later in the year were quite a little bonanza to this humble penman, who had happened to meet, several months before, a traveller from these far-off regions, and had received from him much valuable information, which made first-class "copy" when the boom arrived.

The previous year, 1896, was more representative, and might be taken as a fair average. We then had the Transvaal affair, the Ashanti expedition, the Dongola expedition, the Matabele rising, the Venezuelan dispute, the Armenian outrages, the disturbances in Constantinople, and a number of other affairs of

similar, though slighter, importance. All these suggested scores of topics to newspaper contributors; and the present writer, who had never been within a thousand miles of Johannesburg or Buluwayo, but had the means of securing first-hand information from friends who were acquainted with South Africa, wrote not a few articles dealing with such subjects as "Life in Johannesburg," "About the Rand Mines," "Journalism in Buluwayo," "Rinderpest and the Native Problem in South Africa," which he found no difficulty in "placing." Again, the American Presidential Election supplied one with a prolific subject, and with the aid of several easily accessible authorities one had no difficulty in compiling a number of articles, such as "How the U.S. President is Elected," "The Uncrowned King of America," and so forth, all of which were readily accepted by editors while interest in the Presidential campaign endured. The mission of Li Hung Chang, the visit of the Czar of Russia to the Queen, the loss of the *Drummond Castle*, the Fenian scare, the enthronement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the earthquake, and many a score of other topics which were before the public, in the daily and weekly press for a few days, a few weeks, a month or so, afforded endless suggestions for articles in 1896; nor was that year an exception to the general rule. And it may be said with confidence that there was room for more articles dealing in an interesting way with certain phases of these subjects than were written or published.

Let the would-be contributor to the newspaper press study the news columns of his daily paper, and note the subjects which the sub-editor has

headed with prominent type and placed in conspicuous parts of the sheet; let him write something about these, either at first hand or compiled from little-known sources, and he has taken the first step to interest the editor in his contribution. I think I have thus made it plain that what is wanted for daily and weekly journals is contributions written with a first regard to the topic of the moment, and in a style which will not tempt the man in the car, who is the average newspaper reader, to think that the contributor has been sitting up late with a Dictionary and a book of Latin and French quotations. But the treatment of the subject is left for another chapter.

The popular weekly press is next in our rough division of journalism, and by "popular" I include all periodicals of the class of *Tit-Bits, Cassell's Saturday Journal, The Golden Penny, Pearson's Weekly, Sheffield Weekly Telegraph,* or *The People's Friend*—all the penny weeklies, in a word, that depend upon stories and articles, and not upon news, for their popularity. Here it is not a first essential that the contributor must deal with topical subjects; though, to some extent, articles touching questions of the moment in a light and superficial style commend themselves to the editors of these publications. But they must be light and superficial. A learned study of the causes of earthquakes, for instance, would be promptly declined with thanks by the editors of any of the periodicals above named, while a clearly written contribution relating some curious effects of seismic disturbances would probably meet with their ready acceptance. Indeed, to be perfectly frank, there is

little demand for learning in this kind of journalism —nay, a profound knowledge of any subject would be a positive drawback to anyone who sought to become a successful contributor to the popular penny press. The reason for this is not far to seek: the large section of the community who read the penny papers care little for learning in its profounder depths, and are only interested so long as one can tell them something curious or extraordinary.

"Superior" journalists—that is, those anonymous scribblers who look down from the lofty places of the *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review* and pity every other wielder of the pen labouring in the dark beneath—these superior persons are never tired of disparaging the productions of popular journalism; and while it need not be denied that there is much in such journalism that is not entirely commendable, taken as a whole it is certainly very creditable, and it meets with the ready acceptance of the great mass of the community. It is invariably wholesome, and if it has a tendency to scrappiness, why, that is only the tendency of all latter-day literature. But I have no desire to raise the question of the worth or worthlessness of popular journalism; I am only here concerned with it as a branch of press work which offers a wide field to the young writer and makes no great demand upon his intellectual powers. While it might be no tribute to one's literary ability to say that one had been permitted to make an occasional appearance in the columns of *Tit-Bits*, not a few of our prominent authors to-day have been glad of the guineas so earned (Mr. Max Pemberton, the present editor of *Cassell's Magazine*, says that he made from £200 to

£400 a year in his early days by writing for *Tit-Bits, Answers,* and kindred periodicals), and if one can bring oneself to do the work it pays even better than writing for some of the monthlies.

But I am diverging a little from my theme—the choice of a subject. Well, to be brief, the popular weeklies want articles which will interest the man in the street, or the woman at the fireside, and will not make any appreciable tax on his or her mental capacity. Out-of-the way facts, curious scraps of lore, personal notes of famous or eccentric people, remarkable and exciting experiences, gleanings in any of life's numberless byways, these are the materials for using in the construction of articles for the popular press, and such materials are lying thick around everyone who keeps his eyes moderately well open. The journalistic instinct—the capacity for discerning the interesting side of everyday occurrences—should enable the writer for the penny periodicals to fill a notebook every week with more suitable subjects than he will be able to write up in a month.

Turning to the monthly magazines (the heavy reviews, such as the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Contemporary,* are not included in this catagory, of course), we have to note a growing tendency on the part of their conductors to bring them more into touch with the literary likings of that vast reading public which has made the fortunes of Sir George Newnes, Mr. Harmsworth, Mr. Pearson, and the other proprietors of popular periodicals. The magazines that catch the popular taste are the magazines that make most money; the most successful magazines

are those that pay their contributors best, and it is with these that all who have chosen to live by their pens are primarily concerned. It requires no very painstaking study of the contents of the magazines of the day to arrive at some idea of the kind of contributions they want. Fiction is an important feature in every case, and thanks to the spirited lead of the *Harmsworth* and the *Royal* unknown authors who can produce a good tale have now as much chance of admission to Magazine-land as those who have already earned a reputation in Book-land. Still, success is likely to be more easily won with miscellaneous articles than with short stories, unless one is specially gifted; as magazine editors are always open for contributions on attractive subjects, which, provided they are treated with a fair amount of literary skill, will secure readers apart from the writer's name. Subjects which lend themselves to illustration are doubly welcome.

Supposing one is acquainted with the details of some interesting industry, and can gain admission to a large factory in his district, he might produce an acceptable article on this subject, and secure a series of photographs showing the people at work. Or, say one lives in the neighbourhood, or within easy reach, of some place of literary or historic interest, let it be Haddon Hall or Hawarden, Gad's Hill or Flodden Field, here is a possible subject for a magazine article, and a certain subject if anything may have happened to revive public interest in that particular place. There are hundreds of such subjects lying ready to hand, articles on which would stand a good chance of acceptance by the editors of the popular monthlies.

They are not fettered by time nor dates, and any subject is suitable so long as it is generally interesting and decently written. But an article written in advance about some important event that is to happen has always an additional recommendation. There is also a steady growth of good interviews among the contents of the monthly magazines, and interviewing may be practised by the provincial journalist for the monthlies quite as well as by the London penman; for every large provincial centre, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, or Dublin, possesses at least a score of eminent men and women who would be potential subjects for magazine interviews.

Finally, there are the trade and class journals. Many of these are published weekly, but the bulk of them appear only once a month. Here there need be no difficulty in the matter of choosing one's subject. If one has some information of interest to engineers, there are quite a number of engineering journals which may be approached. So, too, in carpentry, building, printing, and all the other trades; for there is scarcely any branch of business which has not one or more organs in the press, the journals published in the interests of drapers, grocers, tailors, and timber dealers being most ambitious and very prosperous prints. By "class" papers I mean publications which advocate temperance reform, vegetarianism, or any of the numerous "causes" with which we are all familiar in these days, or cater for religious readers by largely devoting their contents to religious affairs, or deal with cycling and the cycle trade, or any form of sport—papers which, in a word, are published for

some specific purpose, and not for "the general reader." For all such publications contributions must deal with topics in which their readers are likely to be interested, and, though this may seem a trite remark, it is really all that can be said about the choice of a subject so far as this class of periodical is concerned. The native intelligence of the young journalist will tell him that what is suitable for the *Engineer* would scarcely meet with acceptance by the editor of the *Draper's Record.*

After all is said that can be said on this point, the choice of a subject is still the most trying thing for the beginner; it is that which tests, first and finally, one's journalistic capacity. A young man with lots of ideas is sure to have no difficulty in thinking about subjects, and as there can be no doubt that subjects are the first consideration with editors, the young man with ideas has gold in his brain.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUBJECT: ITS TREATMENT.

Having got over the difficulty of selecting a subject on which something of interest may be said, the next thing is to say this something in the most interesting way. This accomplishment only comes with experience or study; for here is the real art of literature. But there are certain observations which may be made in this connection for the guidance of the beginner. Personally, I have always held the belief that the finest training for the journalist is a thorough grounding in Euclid and Algebra. These sciences teach one order: a man who has mastered his Euclid will always write with a purpose; he will set out from a certain place and arrive at the destination he had in view when he started. He will treat any subject in an orderly, intelligent manner; and this is all-important. An article should be an intelligent whole: it should have an object as well as a subject.

But first of all we have to deal with the collection of material. It is a hard task to make bricks without straw; and the bricklayer who has no bricks can do but little with his mortar and his trowel towards the building of a house. So is it with the writer: he must have at hand the material for the construction of his article, then he must know how to put this together with the greatest effect. And it is precisely

to the extent that he has made the best use of his material that an author is entitled to our commendation. While one man with a pile of data at his elbow will produce but a poor article, another with a smaller supply will turn out a much better contribution. It all depends upon the discrimination of the individual.

One has to be personal sometimes in order to illustrate his meaning, and if I have now to refer to my own method of preparing an article set it to me, if you please, for no egotism, but simply for a desire to speak at first hand and to give my readers the benefit of my own experience. When I began writing for the press a good many years ago, like all other amateurs, I had no clearly defined methods of work, but with the lapse of years I have come to appreciate the value of method, and to this, as much as any other quality, any advance I have made is due. As a general rule I will have twenty or thirty articles of a certain kind on the stocks at one time; and this is how I go about it. Having, in the daily discharge of my editorial duties, to peruse a large number of newspapers, I have accustomed my eye to catch all the little oddities of daily life reflected therein. Here will be a paragraph about an amusing police-court case, there an account of some strange happening, a wonderful escape from death, an extraordinary suicide, a surprising adventure, or in another corner there may be a witty story of some eminent person. These are all as valuable to me as bricks to the bricklayer. My blue pencil ticks them off at once; later on they are cut out by a pair of humble necessary scissors, and then they are placed in envelopes bearing the names of the subjects they

have suggested. Thus, I turn to my pigeonholes at this moment and find a large bundle of envelopes, some full of clippings, like ripe peapods, and others as thin as early fitches, on which are written such titles as "Drawing the Long Bow" (American yarns), "Players and their Pets," "Motor Car Mishaps," "Stories of the Queen," "Hairbreadth Escapes," "Cabinet Secrets," (How they are Revealed), "English as 'tis Writ," "Curiosities of Journalism," "Scottish Humour," "New Woman Freaks," and so on, and so on. The bulky envelopes I shall presently empty of their contents and weld these into articles; the thin ones grow stouter day by day, and new ones are constantly being added, so that for this kind of article (for which there is an inexhaustible demand) there is an unlimited supply of material.

It will be said, no doubt, that this is not very high-class literary work. True; but it is very decent journalism, and it pays the young writer a great deal better than composing poems about the vernal beauties of Spring, and it can be done without damaging one's better work, although it seems to me that there is little to choose between the ability that is required to produce an attractive article on such subjects as I have mentioned and that which enables the leader-writer to spin out a column of criticism on last night's Parliament. The one is just about as creditable to the writer as the other. I know what it is to do both; but this is a point which does not arise within the scope of this treatise, and need not be pursued.

With one's material collected in the manner described, the task of compiling an article becomes

merely a question of good taste and discrimination. If one were preparing the article on "Hairbreadth Escapes," it would be wise to set out by writing a paragraph of a general nature, then to follow on with a really exciting story, to fill up the body of the article with incidents which could be arranged in a sequence suggested by their affinity to each other, while one of the best stories would have to be kept for the tail of the article. In this way the reader's attention would be aroused at the beginning, and sustained throughout by the judicious setting forth of the various incidents, and the appetite left insatiate at the end: an article with a tame conclusion is as ungainly as a Manx cat. One thing to be guarded against in compiling an article of this kind is the temptation to dwell too long on the writer's views of the incidents which he relates. This is a mistake. He ought to pass from one to the other without any circumlocution, remembering that his readers may be quite as intelligent as himself, and quite as able to appreciate the marvellous circumstances of his various stories without being instructed by him where to laugh, or weep, or marvel. I have in my mind at the moment a series of little books on Scottish Character, compiled by a Glasgow author mainly on the lines I have laid down; but all his stories are spoiled by his irritating habit of trying to improve them by garnishing them with his own jejune opinions.

It has been said that the journalist is not required to be so much a man of great erudition as one who knows where to put his finger on any information he may require. This is a truism. For it is impossible

that any human being could, in reality, possess the encyclopædic knowledge attributed to the modern journalist. But experience soon teaches one where to look for material for an article on any conceivable subject, and the journalistic ability will enable him to serve that up with discretion and effect, although he may forget all about it a fortnight afterward. There are numerous books packed with matter for endless articles. Thousands of articles have been built up from such works as *Chambers's Book of Days, Haydn's Dictionary of Dates, Whitaker's Almanack,* and the various encyclopædias. When the practised journalist gets an idea and only requires some information to turn it into an article, he is never at a loss for that information. Although his sources of knowledge are open to all, everybody is not struck with the idea at the same time, and it is the idea that is worth the money. For instance, when we were having so much trouble with Venezuela and the Transvaal, and there was great public interest in these little republics, one day I turned up the "Foreign Countries" section of handy old *Whitaker,* and in half an hour had jotted down sufficient data concerning "Miniature Governments" to compile a brief article on the subject, which was immediately accepted by *Tit-Bits,* and paid for at the rate of three guineas. And this was good, honest journalism. For there were, first of all, the idea, then the judgment necessary to marshal the facts in the most telling manner, and the production of an article which would tell many thousands of people something they had not known before. Anybody might have written such an article—only the idea had not previously occurred to anybody to

do so, or, at all events, to send it to the same periodical.

An essay has been defined as "a loose sally of the mind; an irregular, indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition." That was Dr. Johnson's definition, and while it was essentially true of the essay as practised in his day, it is scarcely a correct description of the essay as we know it to-day. Like an ordinary composition—which, as I have already said, must be an intelligent whole—the essay nowadays is regular, and moves forward to a given end. A short treatise on any subject may correctly be spoken of as an essay: an essay on birds, or beasts, on acting, or art. Johnson's definition would rather apply to-day to what we call a sketch. For this is "an irregular, indigested piece," written perhaps with a view to describing a beautiful scene, or an incident in everyday life, or only for the mere sake of the language. In such a case literary style is of first importance, and as style is the very thing that the beginner lacks, the sketch is the most difficult form of literature in which to secure early success.

But descriptive writing ought to be early cultivated. The good descriptive writer is one of the most desirable of journalists, and invariably one of the most successful. Dr. Robertson Nicoll says: "What a field there is for the diligent and patient writer of good paragraphs, and especially for people who can write good descriptive reports! That is a very rare gift indeed. I have again and again known cases where most interesting events took place in towns where my journal has a large circulation; many of

my readers must have been present at these, and yet not one of them sent me anything. Nothing can hold back the journalist who can do really good descriptive reporting, and who can send fresh news. The richest newspaper proprietor in this country said to me lately that he, too, in his great sphere found, as I have done in my small, that the people who could and would do this well were geniuses in their way, and as rare as geniuses of other kinds." This is just a trifle overdrawn, perhaps; but Dr. Nicoll is an authority on journalism to whom we all must lift our hats, and there is no doubt that good descriptive writing is at a premium. This should be an encouragement to the young journalist to cultivate it. Nor is there more fascinating work. He should try his hand on descriptions of any historic or picturesque spot he may visit, keeping his eyes well open for everything worthy of record, and describing the scene and its associations in the most picturesque language at his command, carefully avoiding anything approaching high falutin'. Those who wish to excel in this branch of literature ought to study all the poets who, like Burns, Wordsworth, Longfellow, and Tennyson, get "near to nature's heart." From them they will learn where to seek for natural beauty, and they cannot help catching something of their power of description.

Another very interesting kind of literary work is biography. Nothing is more stimulating than to have an article to write on someone whose life has been worthy of record. Biography is the most human of all literature. It can also be especially recommended to the beginner, as there is always a

ready market for interesting articles dealing with some phases of the lives of celebrities of the past or present. In compiling a biographical sketch, of course, the method of construction is comparatively obvious. One generally begins at the beginning in such a case, and simply traces the life of the subject "from the cradle to the grave"; but it need scarcely be urged that such a mechanical treatment must result in an unfortunate sameness between all the biographical sketches which proceed from the one pen. What is to be desired in all writing is variety, and this is quite as necessary in biography as in anything else. It is advisable, therefore, to vary one's method of treatment as much as possible, and while one will usually record the birth of a man before chronicling his later life, or death, there are numerous ways in which biographies may be varied. While a straightforward record may suit in one case, in another it might be well to start with some reference to the life-work of the subject and work back to his birth by contrasting his juvenile surroundings with his eventual attainments, or in a third case it might be wise to dwell largely on only one characteristic, taking up the circumstances of the subject's birth and upbringing, and showing what influence these might have had on the development of this leading trait.

When I set out to write this chapter I fancied I had much to say that would be of use to my readers, and while I venture to think that my observations have not been altogether purposeless, and may be of some value to journalistic aspirants, I am now conscious that this has been the most difficult paper of

the series to write. For though there is much to be said as to the treatment of a subject, it can best be said *vivâ voce* and by illustration; and this is so clearly a question which is bound up with the individuality of the man that no advice can be of so much avail as actual experience. What a man evolves from his own experience, learns from his failures, profits by his successes, is something that he can scarcely hope to purchase at second hand. Still, a good deal can be done to smooth the path of the tyro.

Before passing from this subject, let me add that what is even more important than a plentiful supply of material for articles is accuracy in facts. As Lord Salisbury says, "Always verify your references."

This is a sound principle; for one should never use dates, nor statistics of any kind, without testing them so far as that is possible. And need the young author be warned against a striving after smartness? My experience answers in the affirmative. It ill becomes one who is handling his pen with an unpractised grasp to attempt the *rôle* of censorious critic, and to go out of his way to say something clever (as he thinks) about somebody of much greater experience or eminence. Yet this is the common vice of young writers. Give the average young man a fountain pen and a column of space to fill, and (if I may be pardoned a metaphor dangerously bovine) he will play the bull in the china shop, smashing reputations right and left, and shattering many popular idols. The folly of this need not be pointed out; but foolish though it be it is very

human, and there are few penmen to-day who will not tell you that in their sallet days they gave their pens a licence which, in their quieter moments, they recall with a shiver and a cold sweat. Let the young author remember that nothing is lost by being *suaviter in modo,* that simplicity of language is a jewel, and that brevity is the soul of more than wit.

CHAPTER IV.

SHORT STORY WRITING.

Perhaps the most marketable literary article to-day is the short story. If one could possibly compute the number of short stories that appear in the newspapers, periodicals, and magazines of the United Kingdom the figures would be amazing. Publications of every conceivable kind use short stories nowadays; even trade organs. The result is that a really good short story has never far to wander before it finds a home; and as the demand for this class of literary work is likely to increase rather than diminish, those who have the aptitude for it, or care to qualify themselves for it, may be assured of some measure of success. In saying "care to qualify themselves," I suggest that the art of short story writing may be acquired, and this to a certain extent is true—but only to a certain extent.

It can be acquired in this way: The mechanism of the short story may be mastered by study; plots or subjects can be found if one learns how to search for them, and by exercise one may attain to such proficiency as he is capable of in writing dialogue, narrative, and description.

What do I mean by mechanism? Well, I mean the method by which one builds up a short story from the opening sentence to the closing paragraph, and

unless one has some conception of this his story is certain to be a flabby, unequal production. Method in a short story is absolutely essential. In a full novel there is more room to come and go, so to speak; more opportunity for by-play, which may improve the book rather than otherwise, but which in a short story is destructive.

If you have determined to write a story of from 4000 to 6000 words—the usual size for newspapers and magazines—you should have your idea absolutely definite in your mind before putting pen to paper, for there is no room to wander by devious paths to your goal with only four or five thousand words to be used. You must fix your ending and make straight for that, every sentence you write moving you nearer to that given point. In this case I am speaking of a short story which depends for its interest on an incident or series of incidents; but there are many kinds of stories, and some in which incident is of no importance whatever.

The able writer of a useful little book, called "How to Write Fiction," classifies the various kinds of short stories excellently, although it would be an easy matter to extend his classification. They are: (1) Tale, a story of adventure or incident of any sort, like many of Stevenson's, or pre-eminently Scott's or Dumas'; (2) Fable or allegory, a tale with direct moral, like Hawthorne's short stories; (3) Study, in which there is a descriptive study of some type or character or characteristic, such as Miss Wilkins's studies of New England people, Mr. Barrie's Scottish studies, Miss Barlow's and Mr. Frank Mathew's Irish studies, and numerous others

that might be mentioned; (4) Dramatic Sketch, a story whose value depends on a clever dramatic situation, or a dramatic statement of an idea, like Stockton's "Lady or the Tiger?" &c.; (5) Complete Drama, like Maupassant's short stories. The drama combines all the other elements into one single effective story.

Now, the first class has always been immensely popular with readers, and at no time more than the present. It is the simplest of all to write. You select your adventure, and you are a poor student if a study of interesting periods of history does not soon supply you with adventures and to spare as subjects for your tales. Having secured a thorough grip of your idea, decide in your mind how few characters you need employ to place before your reader as clear a conception of the adventure, the incident, or the idea, as exists in your own mind. And always remember that the fewer characters you can do with the better. There will be one, or perhaps two, characters that must stand out in bold relief; be careful that that one, or those two, are described in a way that will give the reader a mental picture of their outward appearance, and some inkling as to their character; so that he may form in his mind an idea as to how they will act when the crisis comes. If you make them quit themselves at the critical moment in a way that convinces the reader they acted in consonance with their characters, then you have succeeded.

In writing a story of this kind a background is essential, and it may be found in a few slight touches suggesting the conditions of a historical epoch, of

the manners of a picturesque period, or of contemporary society. But such touches should be put in with a sparing hand, as the purpose of the tale is an incident, and everything must lead up to this. Weigh well every paragraph after it is written, and ask yourself, "Does this concern my main incident in any degree?" If you are convinced that it will help your readers forward to what you have in store for them, leave it in; if it has no connection whatever with your chief idea, then out with it. A proper short story has no room for extraneous matter.

In the Tale the narrative form will most largely be used, the writer speaking either in the first or third person, the former being easier to maintain; and dialogue being introduced only at such points as the author considers the thoughts of his characters are too important to his plan to be given in the third person. Dialogue should always be designed to give the reader a glance at the open soul of the character talking, and dialogue should always be in short, "snappy" sentences, after the common manner of talking. To make it as natural as possible, always read it aloud, and never pass it until it sounds natural and easy when subjected to this test. The best way to acquire a command of dialogue is to carefully study its use by such masters as Dickens and Thackeray, and the standard novelists generally.

The descriptive passages in a tale—that is to say, references to the weather, the season of the year, the time of day, the appearance of the country—should be very slight, and ought to be omitted altogether unless one or other of these things happens to have some bearing on the incident that is to be described

further on. And when you have described your incident or adventure, stop right there, as the Yankees would say. Don't put down one word more after the catastrophe has happened; don't wind up with any commonplace platitudes. Leave the rest to your reader to fill in.

What about writing a certain number of words then? you will ask. Believe me, no man can write a good story in an absolutely fixed number of words; but he can, by practice, manage to tell a tale within a given space. This, however, means that in the first case he must choose a subject that is likely to serve him so far. A story is worth no more words than those that are required to tell it, and it is only experience that can enable one to judge as to this.

As I have already remarked, tales of adventure and historical episodes are immensely popular just now. Cutcliffe Hyne's "Adventures of Captain Kettle" strike me as admirable examples of brisk, short stories. He selects a striking situation, works up to it sentence after sentence, places it before us with a few quick phrases, either of dialogue or narrative, and leaves us with it firmly impressed upon our mind. Max Pemberton in his delightful "Signors of the Night" chooses an exciting adventure, introduces his characters, sets them to work, moves them step by step towards some happening at which we can only guess, suddenly brings them into a critical situation, describes in a few words some consequences, suggests others, and finishes without further palaver.

Touching the Fable or Allegory, it may also be said that this is a common form of the short story, and it is one in which style is very requisite. At the outset

it is difficult to "grip" the reader with an allegory, and the advantage of a pleasant style in coaxing him to bear you further audience until your tale unfolds is obvious.

The Study of Character, which the writers I have mentioned have rendered so very popular, is really more difficult than telling a good straightforward story. All short stories are concerned with character more or less, but when the purpose is purely and simply to illustrate a type the work must be done most artistically in order to attract and convince. Never for a second must the purpose be out of the writer's mind; every paragraph should illustrate some facet of the character being depicted, or describe some of the environments or incidents which go to the making of the character. There is a steady demand for the character sketch, and even the much be-gossiped "Kailyard" school is still a power in literature, readers being ready for any new work of that class that is likely to be produced. But while one may get along very well without "style" in writing adventure tales, this subtle quality is absolutely essential to the success of the character sketch. "Ian MacLaren," Barrie, Frank Mathew, Jane Barlow, all have style in the best sense of the word, and yet the touch of each is different. Nor must one attempt to depict character with which one is not intimately acquainted. No Englishman, for instance, could hope to produce a Scottish sketch that would rank with the meanest products of the Kailyard school; no Scotsman could possibly succeed in writing Irish sketches with any approach to the colour of Jane Barlow's "Bogland Studies," or Frank

Mathew's "At the Rising of the Moon." In the character sketch—which is that and nothing more—a first essential is the intimate knowledge of, and sympathy with, the character to be depicted.

Turning to the Dramatic Sketch we touch a very different kind of short story, and one in which success may be more readily achieved. Speaking broadly, the dramatic sketch depends for its effect upon one striking incident; it stands in relation to the short story proper as the melo-drama stands to the drama. The method of constructing a short story of this nature is perhaps more mechanical than any other. The author conceives a dramatic situation, which is to end the story, just as a thrilling "curtain" ends every act of your good, healthy melo-drama. He decides upon the imaginary actors he will employ, tells what they did, frequently puts words into their mouths, and so arrives at his "situation" without any circumlocution. Then he describes as plainly, but as vividly, as he can how the characters played their parts when the critical time came, and having done so rings down the curtain on a striking "picture."

The Complete Drama, such as we find in the little masterpieces of Guy de Maupassant, is a far different thing to construct. Here the author essays not merely to depict character, to describe scenes and events, to produce "situations," but to give what is somewhat erroneously termed "a novel in a nutshell." No short story can be a condensed novel; the thing is a contradiction in terms and an impossibility, but, of short stories, that which has the closest affinity to the novel is the complete drama, inasmuch as it is not

fragmentary, as most other short stories are, but a perfect whole, covering probably many years of a life. It consequently calls for the very highest art, and only consummate skill such as Maupassant's can make this form of story pure literature. Yet, with the natural aptitude for story-telling and much practice, one may succeed in producing tales of this class, which will make very pleasant newspaper reading, and find ready acceptance with editors.

To specify other forms of short stories would be an easy matter; for the five classes given represent an arbitrary, though excellent, category. But no practical purpose would be served by a further disquisition upon the different kinds of short stories, as we have been considering thus far the art of short story writing from the point of view of the contributor to the press, rather than that of the ambitious young author, who looks to the more permanent department of literature for the bestowal of his works. It would occupy the whole of this book to deal adequately with the subject in hand, and my present purpose can only be to suggest.

A word or two may be added, however, as to the finding of plots. I use the word finding advisedly, for plots are generally treasure trove, and they are frequently found when one is not searching for them. It seems to me that the best way to get a good supply of ideas for short stories is to become a diligent student of the daily press. The reports of legal cases and the police courts yield an endless supply of plots for little stories, and even for full novels. The circumstances as they stand in the bald chronicles of the newspaper reporter are seldom complete in

dramatic interest, but they are frequently suggestive, and that is all that is required. Many items of news each week contain the germ of striking "storyettes," and I should advise young writers to practise with these.

By "storyettes" I mean short tales of about 2000 words in length; for which there is a constant demand in all classes of publications. They should have only one striking incident and only two or three characters, or only one character whenever that happy minimum is practicable, and they should be written in brisk, short paragraphs.

I am tempted to further extend this chapter by the following extracts from a symposium on "How to Write a Short Story," which appeared in the *Temple Magazine* some time ago :—

Mr. Robert Barr, who is one of the masters of short story writing, and achieved fame as a humourist under the *pseudonym* of "Luke Sharp," wrote: "It seems to me that a short story writer should act, metaphorically, like this—he should put his idea for a story into one cup of a pair of balances, then into the other he should deal out his words; five hundred; a thousand; two thousand; three thousand; as the case may be—and when the number of words thus paid in causes the beam to rise on which his idea hangs, then is his story finished. If he puts a word more or less, he is doing false work.

"I often think there was much worldly wisdom in a remark the late Captain Mayne Reid once made to me. 'Never surprise the British public, my boy,' he said; 'they don't like it. If you arrange a pail of water above a door so that when an

obnoxious boy enters the room the water will come down upon him, take your readers fully into your confidence long before the deed is done. Let them help you to tie up the pail, then they will chuckle all through the chapter as the unfortunate lad approaches his fate, and when he is finally deluged they will roar with delight and cry, 'Now he has got his dose!'

"My model is Euclid, whose justly celebrated book of short stories, entitled 'The Elements of Geometry,' will live when most of us who are scribbling to-day are forgotten. Euclid lays down his plot, sets instantly to work at its development, letting no incident creep in that does not bear relation to the climax, using no unnecessary word, always keeping his one end in view, and the moment he reaches the culmination he stops."

Mr. Walter Raymond, the author of "Charity Chance" and other delightful stories, said: "Many people suppose that if a story is told in a few words it is a short story. Not at all. It may be a mutilation, like cutting a long tail short—or the skeleton of a novel—the bare ribs even of a fine old three-decker. It takes more than brevity to make the real story short—the work of art. It takes a deep and sympathetic insight into human life. There is little room for construction. The work must be vital and grow into form like a flower.

"A human life is a plant. Its roots run deep into the earth; its whole existence is a striving to rear its head into the light. In a supreme moment it bursts into new colour and form, passionate or tender, fragrant or foul, after its kind. That is the flower.

The scientist can hold it in his hand and read the history of the plant. All flesh is grass, but there is infinite variety, and you will be wise to pick the human specimens you understand. Show us the psychological moment; give us a sniff of the earth below; a glimpse of the sky above; and you will have produced a fine short story. It need not exceed two thousand words."

Mr. Arthur Morrison, the talented author of "Tales of Mean Streets," and a true literary craftsman, who had a long fight for recognition, sent the following very practical advice in the course of his contribution to the symposium :—"Little can be said in the abstract to help the beginner who would learn the technic of the short story. But of things that may be cultivated, the command of form is the first; indeed, I think it is all. Let the pupil take a story by a writer distinguished by the perfection of his workmanship—none could be better than Guy de Maupassant—and let him consider that story apart from the book, as something happening before his eyes. Let him review mentally *everything* that happens —the things that are not written in the story as well as those that are—and let him review them, not necessarily in the order in which the story presents them, but in that in which they would come before an observer in real life. In short, from the fiction let him construct ordinary, natural, detailed, unselected, unarranged fact; making notes, if necessary, as he goes. Then let him compare his raw fact with the words of the master. He will see where the unessential is rejected; he will observe how everything is given its just proportion in the design; he

will perceive that every incident, every sentence, and every word has its value, its meaning, and its part in the whole. He will see the machinery, and in time he may learn to apply it for himself."

To this same symposium short papers were also contributed by the late Harold Frederic, Mr. G. B. Burgin, Mr. Joseph Hocking, Mr. Manville Fenn, Mr. Guy Boothby, Miss Jane Barlow, and Mrs. L. T. Meade; but none of these treated the subject in so practical a way as the writers quoted. Their contributions were more personal, though no less valuable on that account. The late Mr. Frederic said that he had found from experience that he could do nothing satisfactory in the way of a short story under 5000 words, and that was also the smallest space in which Mrs. Meade said she could "feel comfortable and at home." Mr. Fenn declared for absolute liberty: sit down and write till your story is told; that was his advice. Mr. Burgin threw out a happy suggestion: go to work on the method accredited to Mr. Phil May, who draws his picture and then deletes every stroke that is not absolutely essential. In other words: write your story, *then* "boil it down." As for Miss Barlow, she was forced to the conclusion that, "after all, the truth, I fancy, is that there are ways of many a sort of constructing stories short, and every single one of them is wrong, except for its owner." A similar thought was expressed somewhat differently by Mr. Boothby, himself a most capable craftsman in this particular "line," who wrote:—

"The question of *how* a short story should be written seems to me hardly worth considering so long

as it *is* written and the public like it. As Mr. Kipling says—

> There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays,
> And—every—single—one—of—them—is—right.

"If I might say anything, I should advise authors to think their stories out before putting pen to paper—then write them. After that, condense—condense—condense. The rest is a question of instinct."

CHAPTER V.

THE ART OF INTERVIEWING.

Well, it is not exactly a high art; but as there is a right way and a wrong way of conducting an interview, we may take it for granted that there is a certain amount of art in the thing. I am not concerned here and now with the question of interviewing as a praiseworthy or contemptible branch of journalism. That is a point that has been discussed over and over again by those gentlemen who, in their Chinese pride, esteem themselves the guardians of the traditions of British journalism, and consider that the ablest journalist is he who does to-day what his predecessors did fifty years ago. The real inventor of the interview is said to have been none other than M. de Blowitz, the world-famous Paris correspondent of the *Times*, and in his hands it has been a journalistic instrument of the greatest value. It grew to greatness in America, and there, too, it has degenerated into the veriest farce. It has been grafted on the tree of British journalism, and has proved one of its most useful branches, despite the fact that there has been a slight tendency of late to cultivate some features of the debased Yankee plant. But I do not think it is necessary to apologise for the interview; in the parlance of the market place, it has "come to stay."

I am induced to include a chapter upon it in this book because I consider there is room for much work of this kind by outside contributors to newspapers and magazines—especially to the latter, as most newspapers delegate important interviews to members of their editorial or reporting staffs. And I can presume to offer some advice on the subject, having practised the interview many years ago, and having found it an introduction to the pages of more than one well-known magazine.

There is no more delightful kind of journalistic work than this same interviewing. Think for a moment of the introductions to famous people which it brings about. Its mere monetary reward is the least of its gratifying features; for out of one's "interviewing experiences" one can recall many pleasant meetings, and even friendships formed with people whom one originally approached as a humble pressman, anxious to report a chat with them. In this I have no doubt most interviewers will bear me out. Interviewing is really the most interesting, as it is the most varied, department of modern journalism, and a good interview is as valuable a contribution to journalism as a good "leader."

But what is a good interview? This is no difficult question to answer. It is an article which gives a faithful description of an actual meeting with a man or woman of some eminence in any given walk of life —be that politics, the Church, art, literature, science, the stage, or any other profession—and records their opinions on questions upon which they are recognised as authorities. That is a good interview; that is an

interview which performs a most valuable function in the education of the public. The bad interview concerns itself with some posing nobody (of whom the stage furnishes an endless supply), and tells you how that person takes his or her breakfast, what sort of food agrees best with his or her digestive organs, and what he or she thinks about everything under the sun.

The ideal interview is the outcome of some current topic in the world of thought. That is to say, the interview discharges its highest office when it becomes a contribution to some discussion which is attracting the attention of the public. In this way M. de Blowitz has often sent to the *Times* interviews with leading statesmen in Paris, which have been of the greatest public value, and have been quoted and cabled all over the world. But, even when no such public questions are stirring, interviews with men and women whose personality is interesting, and who have something worth saying, constitute a branch of journalism in which no one need ever be ashamed to engage.

The qualifications of the clever interviewer are no ordinary endowments. One might search the whole staff of many a leading newspaper and not find a single member thoroughly equipped for the work. In the first place, the man or woman who seeks to practise interviewing must be widely read and able to discuss intelligently almost every topic that comes within the scope of the Press. Then the interviewer must be a person of good address, capable of meeting his lordship in his library, her ladyship in her drawing-room, with as ready a

grace as if "to the manner born," and not as a cringing flunkey. He must also be "at home" with the bishop, or the famous author in his study, and with the actor in his dressing-room, or the lion tamer in his —, no, not exactly in his cage, though some sensational journalists would think that a veritable triumph of the art! The interviewer must have tact, patience, and forbearance; and he must be able to write down his impressions of his host in good, picturesque English; he must be acutely observant, and a shrewd student of character. These qualifications are not the common endowment of every reporter in the land.

There are various kinds of interviews. There is the conversational, the argumentative, the interrogatory, the one-sided, and the descriptive. These are five very distinct forms, and probably the best interview is neither one nor another, but a blend of several. But we shall take each kind and consider it separately. The conversational is probably the most natural, and in some respects it is the most difficult to write; for it requires some deftness in writing dialogue to make it appear as natural and easy running as it should be. It reports, or pretends to report, a leading question by the interviewer, and then sets down in colloquial phrasing the reply of the interviewee, with perhaps a remark as to the apparent mood of the latter in his speaking. Another question is suggested to the interviewer as the outcome of the interviewee's reply; this is set down and then the response, and so on until the subject under discussion has been exhausted, the words which the interviewer places in his own mouth being fewer and

subordinate always to the responses of the person interviewed.

Some interviewers, and notably Mr. Raymond Blathwayt, aspire to higher things than this, and instead of making their own parts of the dialogue merely small connecting links in the chain of the conversation, have the fortitude to combat and confute (as they may think) the opinions expressed by the person interviewed; thus producing a sort of debate and an article in which the interviewer frequently looms much larger than the interviewee. This method is defended on the ground that an interview means an exchange of views. I don't care one straw what the word means; but of this I am convinced, it is an impertinence for any interviewer to thrust his own opinions to the front, or to presume to argue with a man who is, in all probability, a recognised authority on the subject under discussion. What the reader wants is that man's opinions; not the opinions of the interviewer on those opinions. Therefore, I would advise any young journalist to avoid the argumentative style.

The interrogatory interview is generally a stilted affair, and errs at the opposite extreme from that just described. It consists of a string of questions, asked often without the slightest regard to the preceding answer; and the questions and replies are baldly set down just like the report of evidence at a coroner's inquest. In the case of recording an expression of political opinions this is sometimes the best method to follow; but when there is to be some attempt at literary grace it cannot be recommended.

The "one-sided" interview, as I have named a fourth kind, for want of a more expressive epithet,

is not a very popular form, yet there are times when it is distinctly the best to employ. Here the interviewer never puts a single question into his own mouth; he simply makes the interviewee talk on, each new paragraph suggesting the question. As thus (I quote from an interview of this kind in my own little book, "The Actor's Art") :—

> "No; my experience is that the beginner on the stage is not only ready and willing to accept advice from those who are competent to give it, but that he is anxious to receive," &c.

Here the simple word "no" is sufficient to suggest what the interviewer has been saying to the person interviewed. Again, in the same interview there are paragraphs commencing: "I certainly believe in amateur dramatic societies;" "Long runs! Why, they are the curse of modern acting;" "Yes, I suppose I am an enthusiast for Shakespeare." In each of these cases the questions of the interlocutor are implied, and the interview becomes in effect an unbroken statement by the person interviewed. Where the one object of the interview is to secure an important expression of expert opinion on any given subject this is an excellent plan to follow.

Lastly, we have the descriptive interview. Perhaps I cannot do better than refer my readers to the "Celebrities at Home" series of *The World* for examples of this at its best. In this class of interview no dialogue whatever is introduced, the statements made by the "celebrity" are all rendered in the third person. Obviously this method is only suited to cases wherein the purpose of the interview is merely to present a personal sketch of some celebrity in his

home surroundings, and would not do where expressions of opinion were required. It calls for journalistic ability of a high order; the observant eye, the ready pen, and the shrewd student of character are all to be seen in these *World* articles to which I refer.

But, as I have already said, perhaps a blend of some of these styles makes the best interview in ordinary cases. You commence the article with a touch of descriptive, then introduce some dialogue, and probably arrive at a point where you feel a bit of the "one-sided" interview would enable your subject to specially emphasise some particular opinion, then another touch of the conversational, followed by a gathering together in the third person of some minor observations that may have been made by your subject, and a concluding paragraph in narrative or dialogue, as you may think best.

Having dealt thus far with those qualities which an interviewer should possess and what an interview is, we now come to the more practical question of how to conduct an interview. First of all, one has to arrange an appointment with the great man or woman he wishes to put upon the rack. Diplomacy is often necessary here. A good way is to mention in your letter some subject in which you know your quarry is particularly interested; this arouses sympathy, and often results in objections to the interview being overcome. There is never likely to be any difficulty experienced in gaining an interview with people who are really interesting and have something worth saying: it is the upstarts who are the most difficult to approach. My first interview (I

was a youngster in journalism then) was with the late Professor Drummond. He appeared quite as interested as I was, and this meeting was not our last by any means.

Supposing you have arranged the time for your interview, be sure that you have fortified yourself with sufficient knowledge of the interviewee's life and work to be able to discuss any topic connected therewith that may arise. In this way, I remember I browsed on Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" for a fortnight before I met the author, and he warmly complimented me on the grasp I had got of the subject, as well as the knowledge I was able to evince of his other books and his literary career in general. (I interviewed him for a London literary weekly which had a brief but brilliant existence). Spare no pains in informing yourself in this direction, and think well of what you have decided to ask your subject; even commit your questions to paper, but do not display that when talking with him. The great secret is to start a conversation in some natural way that suggests itself by the circumstances of the moment, and trust to your conversational powers for the rest.

Here an important question arises. Should the interviewer take notes as he goes along? Mr. Stead, I believe, relies mainly on memory, and, personally, I have generally followed Mr. Stead's advice. But shorthand and the note-book are often desirable. Before expressing my own opinion on this point, let me quote from a rather curious article which appeared in the *Young Woman* some time ago—an interviewer's (Mr. A. H. Lawrence) inter-

view with an interviewer (Mrs. S. A. Tooley)! He writes:

"I take a few notes in longhand," Mrs. Tooley told me, "to indicate the channel the conversation has taken. I am afraid I should find shorthand a hindrance more than a help. I should think it must tend to worry your 'subject,' and to prevent his conversation being fluent and natural. But I don't presume to give advice to others in this matter. In my own case I find that to trust to my memory is the better course."

Then I discovered that we held quite divergent views on another point. I had suggested that, especially where one is trusting entirely to memory, the "writing-out" of the article should take place soon after the interview. But Mrs. Tooley held quite the contrary opinion, and told me that she thought it best to let an interview simmer gently, so to speak, before putting pen to paper, as in that way you get rid of the commonplaces, and retain only salient points which have indelibly fixed themselves in your mind. Very often two or three weeks would elapse before the interview would be written. I had explained that, in my own experience, I had found the best course was to write out the interview whilst one's impressions were fresh, and Mrs. Tooley's difference of opinion rather staggered me. Certainly, when one considers the number of appointments with "celebrities" which Mrs. Tooley has, this method of work, with the various subjects and topics interlacing, and with only the briefest longhand notes to go by, indicates the marvellous retentiveness of her memory, more especially when the faithfulness of the result is considered. In brief, Mrs. Tooley's method is to get at the personality of the individual interviewed, and with this object in view she takes as few notes as possible, so that by the aid of her excellent memory and descriptive ability she may be able to record the result of her chat in such a way that the reader is, in a sense, transported to the actual scene of the interview, and makes the personal acquaintance of the celebrity under discussion.

Now, my vote goes to Mr. Lawrence. It seems to me a most extraordinary thing to let two or three weeks pass between the conversation and its report-

ing; hoping thereby to get the real pith of it. In the lapse of time all the chances are that many little points, not individually important but collectively so, will have been erased from the tablets of the memory and the account of the interview suffer in consequence. If one trusts to the memory, don't trust too long; by all means write the article while the impressions of your subject are still vivid in your mind. In this way nothing will be lost, and a more graphic account of the conversation is likely to be produced.

Only use your note book when your subject is making some important statement that should be published practically word for word. Here shorthand is undoubtedly useful, and instead of "worrying" the interviewee it reassures him to know that on this important point his own words and those only are to appear. It may also be mentioned that when (as sometimes happens) a person who has been interviewed desires to repudiate some important expression of opinion he has made, and throw the onus of that on the interviewer, a shorthand note of the words comes in very handy. Often when taking down an opinion to which some weight was attached, I have read the note over again to the person I was interviewing to make sure I had got his exact words; and this has always been regarded with favour, as it manifested on my part an anxiety not by any mischance to misrepresent the speaker.

Always promise to submit a proof of your article before it is published, and never fail to see that this, the least that the journalist can do for the lady or gentleman who has favoured him with an interview,

is carefully fulfilled. It is also good policy, as it fixes the onus of the statements on the right shoulders.

There is not a town or city of any importance that does not possess a score or more of potential subjects for interviews, and, as I have already said, the art may be practised by the outside contributor as easily as by the staff journalist. Communicate with the editor of the newspaper, periodical, or magazine which you think the interview would suit, before you write it, and if you get the commission to do it you can state in asking the "subject" for an appointment that you have been requested to interview him or her for the publication in question, thus strengthening your application considerably.

Interviews are as well paid as any other class of contribution, five or six guineas being the average remuneration for an illustrated interview in one of the magazines, though 10*l.* is frequently given, and I have even heard of thirty sovereigns being paid for an interview contributed to one of the popular illustrated magazines.

The work is especially suited to women, and some of the best of our well-known interviewers are among the fair sex. In this connection the following paragraph from an article in *Atalanta*, telling young ladies how to do an interview, may be quoted :—

> In the case of a society woman, the interviewer has to fall back upon the furniture and the style of the house, to drag in allusions to the lady's husband, her family, her dogs and other pets. Such people have rarely anything of an interesting nature to impart, and it will be observed that in such interviews the teapot plays a very important part. There are, of course,

exceptions to this, when the lady belongs to an historical family, or has the advantage of being the wife of a public man. She will then be able to speak of her social duties as something more important than a mere treadmill of balls, dinners, teas, and luncheons.

This is often the kind of interview Mrs. Tooley and the other lady journalists give us, and I cannot say that a note book or shorthand is necessary here. But, indeed, I scarcely think it is a kind of interview that ought to be encouraged. People who "have rarely anything of an interesting nature to impart" should not be interviewed. There is a demand for "Society" subjects, however, and in these days of keen journalistic competition the humble scribbler cannot hope to realise his or her ideals, so "we'll e'en to it like French falconers, fly at anything we see."

CHAPTER VI.

BOOK REVIEWING.

"CAN you give me any work to do for your paper? Book reviewing I should especially like, as I am quite up-to-date on all literary topics." Something like this is asked of every editor in the land very frequently in the course of every year. For it is strange how many people fancy they are able to review a book, criticise a play, or pronounce judgment on a picture, without the slightest training of any sort. Nothing is more absurd to the trained specialist than this prevalent delusion, and I would warn my readers not to fall into the belief that one may become a literary, dramatic, or art critic, just as easily as take one's dinner. Considerable preparation and wide-reading are essential in each of the cases mentioned; and while many men have achieved success in the dual capacity of art and literary critic, or literary and dramatic critic, few have ever been able to write with authority on all three subjects. By this I would suggest that one may aspire to such knowledge of two of the subjects mentioned as to entitle one's opinions thereon to respect.

In devoting this chapter to Book-reviewing, it were well that I should state before proceeding further how the unattached contributor stands in respect to this class of literary work. As I have already hinted,

many applicants for employment mention reviewing as a thing they should especially like to do. Well, I am afraid that most of these applicants meet with disappointment herein. Reviewing on newspapers of any importance—such as the London dailies and weeklies, and the great Provincial papers, like the *Glasgow Herald, Scotsman, Manchester Guardian, Birmingham Post,* &c., is generally entrusted to a few contributors or members of their inside staffs who have some special knowledge of the subject with which the books to be reviewed may deal. Thus, a medical gentleman, probably a professor at some University or College, will "do" the medical books; a scientist will get the scientific works to review; the novels and poetry will be given to members of the editorial, sub-editing, or reporting staffs, who have a fancy for the work, or perhaps, as in the case of many London papers and some of the leading Provincial sheets, the occasional services of outsiders will also be enlisted here.

How can one get one's services so enlisted? Influence, I fear, is the only "open sesame" to this door. It is essential to procure an introduction to the literary editor before one can hope to be entrusted with some books to review; for it is very rarely, indeed, that any paper of standing accepts a review contributed spontaneously by an outsider, although such a thing is not unknown. How to get this introduction I cannot advise; but if you are determined to become a reviewer of books, I am strongly of opinion that you will find it indispensable.

Supposing, however, one has secured an introduction to an editor, and there is the hope of getting

reviewing to do; it is desirable to have something in the way of credentials. "Have you ever written reviews before?" the editor asks. "Oh, no; but I think I can do the work all right," you reply blithely. The great man strokes his beard and says, "M'yes," or something equally encouraging. Whereupon you feel how much stronger your position would be if you could produce a bundle of reviews written by yourself, even in some obscure print. Now, there are lots of such papers—I know of fairly prosperous Provincial dailies which follow the practice—that do not mind "encouraging" ambitious young *littérateurs* by giving them books to review, and allowing them to retain the books by way of *quid pro quo*, thus filling space very economically! Do not despise the day of small things; do not despise even such a humble avenue to print as this.

Much of the reviewing in the better class papers is done by young University men and briefless barristers, and it is a fairly well-paid branch of journalism. More than this I cannot say; for my own experience of reviewing has been confined to my work as a member of the permanent staffs of the various newspapers in which I have been permitted to write, and an early attempt to secure coveted "outside work" from a well-known daily was not brilliantly successful. Professor Saintsbury in his charming chapter of reminiscence, "Twenty Years of Reviewing," says:—"People will grumble at anything, of course. But for my own part, I do not think that any one but a very great man can consider himself underpaid when he receives, as used to be the average, £3 10s. for work which should on the average

take him an evening to read, and not the whole of the next morning to write." But this happy condition of things does not generally obtain to-day, and the very fascination of reviewing is the reason why it is less liberally paid than it was ten or fifteen years ago: so many are the aspirants for the work.

We will now proceed to a brief consideration of the qualifications of the reviewer and the function of the review. Touching the first point, there can be no manner of doubt that every man who can write is not thereby fitted to review. Even to pass an honest, sensible opinion on the latest novel by the latest candidate for a nine days' "boom," requires of the critic some knowledge of fiction as an art. It is not enough that one should say, "this or that book is good, because it pleases me; or that other is bad, because I do not like it." That is the attitude of the general reader; but the critic must have argument to back up his opinion. He must be able to point out wherein the book fails to please him, and set forth the reasons why he fails to be pleased with the book. The woman's "just because" will never do in criticism, and a review which is all opinion and no demonstration can convince no one. Therefore, no young writer should presume to pass judgment on even a common novelist, unless he has studied the standard authors in respect to their imaginative qualities, their plot construction, their power of characterisation, their literary style, and so on. It may be said that this is very obvious. True; but how often are these conditions ignored? How often do we find young men and women anxious to ventilate their ideas about works of fiction before they have given the slightest

thought to these bare essentials which I have mentioned? The young lady in the drawing-room who gossips gayly about the latest production of Mr. Crockett, Mr. Weyman, or Mr. Hall Caine, esteems herself a critic, but she is as far removed from the critic's condition as the east is from the west. Don't presume to review any book, by any writer, and least of all by a writer of note, until you can say that you have carefully studied those abiding qualities by which the trained critic distinguishes good from bad.

The function of the review is an often discussed subject, and yet it is easy of definition. Professor Saintsbury puts it very tersely. The public "has not time, if it had the other necessaries, for reading everything; it wants to be told, and ought to be told, what to read, not perhaps without the addition of a few remarks how to read it. That is the function which a good review ought to perform." That seems to me to state the case as clearly as need be. But it is to be feared that the average reviewer is somewhat forgetful of this function; the young reviewer is generally so taken up with the thought of scintillating at the expense of some poor beggar of an author that he does not give a fig for his function, but rushes at the book like a bull at a gate. A few of the London papers still admit the work of reviewers when they are in this stage of self-worship, but the silly old "slating" reviews are largely things of the past, and if they linger in the pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette* that is, perhaps, a blessing, for it needs a dash of inconsequential nonsense to liven that dull sheet.

Sir Walter Besant in initiating a discussion on reviewing, in a London evening paper some time ago,

set forth these amongst other conditions, which he deemed necessary to good reviewing:—(1) The book must be treated seriously; that is, as a work worthy of serious treatment. It must, therefore, be treated at some length. (2) The reviewer must have read the book. If he has not, his statement, however benevolent, must be too general to produce any effect at all. (3) There must not be the slightest suspicion of log-rolling, any more than the suspicion of personal animosity. (4) The reviewer must be "competent." In other words, he must be able to show reasons for his judgment—reasons not based upon his mere personal liking, but upon canons and standards which lift his judgment above mere opinion.

These strike one as all very necessary conditions to honest reviewing. Sir Walter appeals, in a way, for seriousness, and the appeal is needed; for one can be entertaining without inflicting unnecessary pain, and one can say all that is called for about a bad book without striving to appear "smart" in the process. No one will write a review which he would be prepared to sign, if need be, without reading the book carefully; yet many flippant journalists undoubtedly "review" books which they have never read. To the young reviewer I would say: ignore the fact that your name may not be appended to your review, and write as if the author and every reader were to be told who wrote the review. In this way honesty at least is attained; and that is a great deal. Do not hunt for faults, any fool can find fault with the greatest works ever written since literature began. Search, rather, for such merits as the book may possess. It is more creditable to recognise good work than to denounce

bad. And when you are convinced that a book is thoroughly bad—that is to say, when your search for merit has failed—say so in as few words as possible; don't display temper. No thoroughly bad book can live, and there is no sense in flogging a dead horse.

Mr. Andrew Lang is an author and journalist whose opinion on this subject is well worth having. He writes:—"In my opinion a critic ought to be able to correct an author where his author is wrong, and to add, if only a little, to the information. Clearly, books of history, science, scholarship can only be criticised by a person who knows the subject." As regards novels, "If he (the critic) is only interested in the art of fiction, fairly well read in it, intelligent, honest, and gifted with a pleasant style, we need ask no more. We often get as much. But we at once encounter prejudice and partiality, personal and literal. Everything that Jenkins writes is praised in the *Theseum*, and is abused in the *Heræum*. The *Theseum* changes proprietors, and Jenkins never gets a good word from it. Novels, in fact, are seldom so good, and perhaps not often so bad, as the reviewers declare."

Here Mr. Lang touches the personal question, and this is a point on which the young writer ought to be warned. Never allow yourself to be prejudiced by any personal circumstance. If you get a book to review which has been written by a man who may be your enemy, and you feel tempted to gloat over the fact that your enemy *has* written a book on which an unsuspecting editor has asked your opinion, be honest about it. Try to forget the man; think only of the

book, and if you cannot manage to do this, do not hesitate to tell your editor that you would rather someone else reviewed the book, as you know the author, that you and he are not friends, and your opinion of his work might be (not to put too fine a point on it) open to misconstruction. On the other hand, don't become, under the greatest temptation, that contemptible thing: a log-roller. There are scores of them rolling their logs every week of the year, and the sight is a distasteful one. Their motto is, "Scratch my back and I will scratch yours," and it is an operation in which many men, well-known in certain literary circles, are frequently engaged. Let no considerations of friendship tempt you to praise a poor book, just as no unfriendly feeling to an author should lead you into any injustice towards his work.

In the discussion to which I have already referred, Mr. George Gissing took part, and he touched a little point of great importance. He wrote:—"One bad habit survives. It is still too common to find a reviewer quoting sentences uttered by a character in a novel as though they came from the author himself —a peculiarly irritating form of misrepresentation. The ordinary reader is too prone to talk about a book in this unintelligent way; a reviewer should be careful to give the habit no encouragement." The justice of Mr. Gissing's plaint is apparent. Too often do we find sloppy reviewers cutting out a slab of dialogue from a novel and saying, "Such are the morals of Mr. So-and-so." Of course, this is not so serious as when the reviewer saddles the novelist with the opinions that have been placed in the mouth of some character,

without even giving the reader an inkling as to how they have been conveyed.

Then Miss Edna Lyall protested against another common failing: "the lazy review." By this she meant the so-called review which is simply a brief outline of the novel with a word or two of perfunctory comment at the beginning and the end. The review which is mainly composed of clippings is also apt to be overdone nowadays, although authors can have less objection to it than to any of the other faults we have been considering.

But, to pass to a larger question—Never be led into the ludicrous ecstasies to which some reviewers of to-day are prone. Try always to preserve some show of sobriety, even when praising a work of which you think very highly. As an example of how a review should never be written, let me quote this from a London review of a very slovenly written book which was no better than many a sixpenny pamphlet, although a publisher had the fortitude to expect the public to pay six shillings for it:

Not a novelist, but an evangelist. A plaintive voice crying in the modern wilderness of stocks and shares, of booms and slumps, of mushroom millionaires. A dreamy seer. A tragical prophetess. A soul bursting with pity and divine indignation and spiritual sorrow. A sister of Harriet Beecher-Stowe, of Florence Nightingale, of Josephine Butler, of all adorable women whose passionately wistful womanhood is freely broken like precious ointment over the aching feet of humanity. Such is Olive Schreiner!

Her new book, "Trooper Peter Halket, of Mashonaland," is written not in ink, but in blood. In every sentence is the echo of a sob, on every page the stain of a tear. Not since "Uncle Tom's Cabin" set the whole world a-weeping has the passion of

pity got itself uttered forth so fierily, so fiercely, I had almost said so ferociously—for, indeed, there is a ferocity of compassionate wrath in Olive Schreiner's gentle soul. I do not think this book will sell as well as "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Its temper is too lofty, too noble, too ethereal, to allure the multitude. Its pathos is too reticent, its sentiment too reserved, to please a public which insists upon having its emotions marked in plain figures. But in a dim, gradual, secret fashion its leaven will work through the social lump, softening, purifying, humanising the materialisms of our times. We are all Imperialists now. We all shout the shibboleth, "Expansion is everything!" Olive Schreiner reminds us of the claims of the ideal, asking us the terrible question: What shall it profit a nation if it gain the whole world and lose its own soul?

I shall not try to summarise this Gospel, this Evangel, this Parable. I might as well try to summarise the Gospel according to St. John.

There is only one word for that sort of thing; it is not a pretty word, it is not a literary word, but it suits the case: "Rot." As to the newspaper or magazine in which the absurd review appeared, my clipping gives no clue; but I could make a shrewd guess at the writer; and so, I think, could you.

While we are writing of how not to do it, I may quote this paragraph from the *Academy* of 22nd October, 1898:—

The following are excerpts from a criticism of a new novel, and they appeared in an evening contemporary last Saturday. We leave the title and the author to our readers' ingenuity: "It is one of the few books which defy comparative criticism. It declines to be classed. It is of no school. It owns no lineage, acknowledges no tradition. Its form is new, its ethical message is new, and both are cast in a giant mould. In the grandeur of its conception, the tremendous sweep of its action, the sublimity of the human passions which wrestle in it like Titans, it soars into the dread ether of Æschylus, the awful altitudes of

Milton. . . . In all literature we can recall no study of the love-passion which can compare with———. Others give us glimpses of the fires in the volcano. They show us the smoke, the cinders, the tongues of flames licking the edges of the crater. But in —— we are in the very heart of the volcano all the time.

It may confidently be said that of no work produced during the last decade is such an estimate true. Absurd panegyrics of this sort are more pernicious than the vicious, slating review, and ought to be avoided by the young writer like poison.

Finally, let us return again to our first-quoted authority. Here are the great essentials as set forth by Professor Saintsbury :—"Study of literature, range in it, opportunity of comparing different kinds, of remembering the vastly different estimates held of different works, or even the same work at different times—are of even more importance to the reviewer than formal teaching in criticism. The latter will save him a great deal of time and trouble, will put him and perhaps keep him in the right road; but it will not accomplish the journey for him. The journey itself must . . . be performed; and it is only at the end of it, or rather (for that end never comes) at a fairly advanced stage of it, that a man becomes a really qualified reviewer." But to study and wide reading we must add yet again a final plea for honesty. "The great merit of even the worst review that retains some shred of honesty is," says Professor Saintsbury, "that however blunderingly, however unsuccessfully, it at least upholds the principle that there is a good and a bad in literature, that mere good intentions will not make up for bad performances.

In short, the review in its very nature, and inevitably, insists that literature is an art, and the man of letters an artist; that to admire bad art is a disastrous and terrible thing, almost worse than the production of bad art itself; and that while to produce the good falls not to all—falls perhaps to few—to admire it, to understand it, to rejoice in it, is the portion of everyone who chooses to take a very small amount of trouble, and the exceeding great reward of that trouble itself."

CHAPTER VII.

DRAMATIC, MUSICAL, AND ART CRITICISM.

A good deal of dramatic and musical criticism is done by outside contributors to the Press, and also a little art criticism. In the case of dramatic criticism, I don't suppose there is a human being who ever saw a stage play that does not consider himself or herself quite competent to pronounce an opinion on any actor from Irving to Arthur Roberts, or on any drama from one of Shakespeare's to Mr. H. A. Jones's latest. The result is that editors are pestered by people who want to "do the theatres" for them, and to charge no fee, considering free admission to the playhouses ample reward for their efforts. Except in the very large centres of population, where salaried representatives are retained, this is the way that London stage papers secure most of their provincial news; but no important newspapers are ever willing to accept theatrical criticisms on these terms; indeed, the work is generally undertaken by members of the reportorial staff.

In the Metropolis, in Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, and other great cities, the leading daily will probably employ the services of a special contributor who has made a study of the drama. Such posts in London are held by well-known journalists—the names of Mr. Clement Scott, formerly of the *Telegraph*,

Mr. Moy Thomas, of the *Daily News*, Mr. William Archer, of the *World*, and many others, will naturally occur to one—and very liberal salaries are paid. In the provinces—and the fingers of both hands would more than represent the special dramatic critics outside London—lineage, or so much per notice, is probably the system of remuneration. Mr. T. Edgar Pemberton, well-known as a successful playwright, and dramatic critic of the *Birmingham Post*, is engaged in commercial work in the Midland metropolis, and Mr. Walter Baynham, who made quite a reputation as dramatic critic of the *North British Daily Mail*, before he went to London, was a teacher of elocution. It is only under special circumstances that an outside contributor is given this work to do for a newspaper of any standing; the reporters' room is the easiest doorway to experience in it. It is very enjoyable work, however, to one who is seriously interested in the stage, and as there are often opportunities of doing "notices" of provincial productions for London theatrical publications (even if the *entrée* to the theatres be the only immediate reward), one who has the inclination for the work should not miss any chance of "getting his hand in."

A conscientious critic will make some attempt to acquire a knowledge of stage history, and the principles of good acting, before presuming to sit in judgment on the meanest barnstormer that ever fretted his hour upon the boards. To this end there is no lack of books that will assist the student; perhaps the very best being George Henry Lewes's invaluable "Actors and Acting." Hazlitt's dramatic essays, and Lamb's charming papers on acting, ought

also to be carefully read and studied; while some of Mr. Archer's books, such as "About the Theatre," "Masks or Faces?" and his "Theatrical World"; or any of the late Dutton Cook's brood of books, are well worth the attention of the student. If I may accept the opinion of so competent a critic as Sir Henry Irving, my own little book on "The Actor's Art" will also be found a handy introduction to the serious study of the stage.

Musical criticism is a branch of journalism that falls more to the outside contributor than the drama. For it cannot be pretended that anyone is competent to criticise music without especial training. Consequently, nearly every paper of any importance in London or the provinces employs a special contributor for this work; as it is surprising how seldom one finds a staff journalist qualified for musical criticism. There are thus many opportunities for one who has a thorough knowledge of the art, and is capable of writing a good critique of a concert or an opera, to get remunerative Press work to do without becoming an inside member of a newspaper staff. Where one lives in a small town, and the editors of the local papers may not be able to afford the luxury of a paid musical critic, it is probably worth while doing the work gratis, for the mere sake of getting into print. I can offer no practical advice on musical criticism—as I was never able to distinguish one note from another—beyond saying that what I have set down in the chapter on book-reviewing applies here equally—"Be honest."

With regard to Art criticism, on most of the second-rate newspapers an ordinary reporter is supposed to

be able to "do the pictures"; but in the case of journals of first standing, if there is no one on the permanent staff who has specialised in Art criticism, then outside aid is enlisted—and the outsider will probably be the curator of the local Art gallery, a collector, a picture dealer, or one who has some particular qualification for the work. But the Art papers are always open to the contributor who can show any originality or ability in his writings; and anyone who has a taste for Art, and a serious desire to do good work as a writer thereon, is pretty certain to force his way into the pages of the Art Press or into the columns of the regular Newspaper Press. It would be supererogation in me to advise such a one as to the course of study best calculated to equip him for the work. There is an enormous library of books on Art, in which the student had best be left to his own devices, with the certainty that John Ruskin will prove as irresistible as the magnet to the steel.

CHAPTER VIII.

PREPARING A MANUSCRIPT.

THE mere preparation of a manuscript may seem to be scarcely worthy of a special chapter; but those who think so make a great mistake. For of the qualities which, especially in a beginner, make for success, taste in the preparation of one's manuscript is one of the most important. Only an editor knows the shortcomings, the carelessness, and the eccentricities of young writers in this respect. I have personally received stories and essays written in such a hand and fashioned in such a style as to immediately suggest the thought that the writers have been bereft of their senses. Imagine, for instance, the impression produced upon an editor when he receives a serial story consisting of upwards of one hundred foolscap pages, each page joined to the other, end to end, by a seam of worsted stitches, and the whole rolled round a wooden spindle, from which it would take several minutes to unwind the awful screed! And this is no fancy picture. I have a vivid recollection of receiving such a manuscript, written in a great sprawling feminine hand, and plentifully bespeckled with grease spots, indicating that it had been prepared on a kitchen table at which the eaters had been somewhat lavish in their use of butter. I

need scarcely add that I also retain a recollection of sending the thing back to its owner.

Nor be it thought this that I have mentioned is a rare experience; most editors who have passed many manuscripts through their hands could recall similar cases. And only a few days before these lines were written, I received a "letter to the editor" consisting of eight foolscap sheets, gummed together, end to end, the whole, when unrolled, making a sheet nearly nine feet long! It is a mystery to me what reason actuates one in so making up a manuscript; we can only put such things down to freaks of the human mind which defy analysis.

It would be an easy thing to write a chapter on the eccentricities of well-known authors in the matter of their "copy." There was one eminent dialectician, with whose work I once had some dealings, who never used a clean sheet of paper, but wrote all his articles on old used envelopes, slitting them down the sides and opening them out to make small sheets: these, and blank pages of letters from friends, were what he used in lieu of copy paper. Another popular author of my acquaintance likewise utilises all sorts of scraps and odds and ends of paper for writing on; but while he uses a pencil, and thinks eighteen words to a page quite sufficient, the first-mentioned wrote with an extremely fine pen, and crammed about three or four hundred words into that space. No matter how inconvenient these eccentricities may be to editors and compositors, authors of reputation can afford to practise them; but not so those who are struggling at the doorway of journalism. Geniuses seem to have a reputation for bad writing, and some folk think that

by writing badly one may become a genius. Some young authors may suppose that if the great Mr. So-and-So writes his articles or his stories in this slovenly fashion and yet has them all accepted, so may they. A little bit of experience is eminently calculated to destroy so foolish a notion. There can be no two opinions on this question: clean, tidy, well-written manuscripts are the best.

The first point to discuss is the choice of paper. There are many considerations to guide one in this matter. Personally, I have used many different kinds and sizes; but experience has brought me to favour two sorts: the one for handwriting and the other for typewriting. Of these anon. Many people use foolscap paper for manuscripts; but the objections to this are considerable. It is so large that it requires four fold-marks in it to bring it within the compass of a foolscap envelope, and when opened out, after being so folded, it is rather clumsy to handle. It also presents at one glance so much matter to the eye that to read it is tiresome; and these are things which the young writer should strive to spare the worried editor. But more serious still: supposing an article written on foolscap gets soiled on the outside pages before being returned to its author, he has to go to the trouble of re-writing these two large pages, whereas, with smaller sheets, the danger of soiling, or the task of re-writing, would have been proportionately reduced. The writer should not offer too large a surface for editorial finger-marks, just as the general should not show too long a front to his enemy.

A good plan to circumvent these editorial finger-marks, and one which I have found very successful,

though I have not seen others follow it, is to enclose your article between two separate sheets of paper, the front one bearing the title and the author's name and address, and the back one being blank. If your article comes back unaccepted, and showing on these outer pages signs of handling, it is a simple matter to detach them, and replace them with fresh pages before sending the manuscript away again. This is another reason in favour of small paper; for to follow this plan with foolscap pages would only add to the clumsy appearance of the article, and waste paper.

For a manuscript article the most convenient size of sheet is the ordinary essay paper, known as quarto, and measuring about $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches across by $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches from top to bottom. This gives one a little more space per page than the usual octavo "copy" paper in use in newspaper offices; and as the paper is ruled a uniform amount of writing can be inscribed on every page, thus assisting the editor in reckoning the length of the article and deciding whether he can find space for it in full. Quarto paper also goes into a foolscap envelope with a single fold lengthwise, or into another size of envelope with one fold cross-wise, and consequently presents a much more attractive appearance to the editorial eye than the great foolscap with its four fold-marks. The quality of the paper should be sufficiently good not to show marks of handling readily, and sufficiently light not to weigh too heavy for postage, as this may be an item of some importance when one has fifteen or a score of articles out at once, with postage paid both ways.

For typewritten articles about the length of a *Globe* "turn-over," or an *Evening Standard* front page special—that is to say, about 1500 or 2000 words—and even for articles two or three times that size, an octavo sheet, about $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 8 or 9 inches, is the best. With a typewriter one has to choose between this size and paper just double, the latter having the objection of the regular foolscap. Nothing looks neater than an article typewritten on this paper—the line running the long way of the page, of course.

Eight to ten such pages make an average newspaper column, and can be read with as much ease as the newspaper column itself. It also has the advantage of being small enough to go neatly into the usual business envelope, known in the trade as "No. 6," with two folds across the narrow way of the paper, or into the regulation "large square" envelope with only one fold. It is at once the neatest, the most convenient, and the most economical size for typewritten articles.

Now a word or two as to handwriting *versus* typewriting. There is some difference of opinion on the relative merits of the old system and the new; but the balance of favour seems to be on the side of typewriting. In reply to inquiries, the editor of *Cassell's Family Magazine* says, "Yes, MSS. should be typed;" *Pearson's* says, "Yes, most certainly;" the *New Review*, "Certainly;" *Windsor*, "Invariably;" *Pall Mall Magazine*, "All MSS. must be typewritten;" *Idler*, "Yes, emphatically;" the *Harmsworth Magazine*, *Cornhill*, *Fortnightly*, *National Review*, and several others also answer in the affirmative. *Blackwood's*, *Harper's*, *Longman's*, *Magazine of Art*, &c., say,

"Preferably;" *Chambers's Journal*, like the *Badminton*, *Boy's Own Paper*, *Scribner's*, *Gentleman's*, and others, says that it is immaterial; while *Temple Bar* says, "Not if handwriting is clear." In no case does any important journal say that it prefers handwriting; so that we may conclude typewritten MSS. are generally preferred; but, except where an editor distinctly stipulates that contributions must be typed, an author who writes a clear legible hand may take it that the reply from *Temple Bar* represents the average editorial opinion on this point. In the course of several years' continual writing for the Press, I have found that the use of the typewriter makes no material difference in the acceptance of one's contributions; for a cleanly written page of manuscript is quite as easily read as one of typewriting.

But the typewriter is of great assistance to the contributor, and for that reason is to be recommended. Indeed, it might fairly be said that it is more useful to the writer in preparing his work than to the editors who are to examine that. In the first place, by means of the typewriting machine one can make several copies of an article at the same time; and the advantage of this to the beginner is apparent: he can then afford to receive back damaged articles from unsympathetic editors, and can send away fresh copies with a minimum of trouble. Secondly, by the use of the typewriter one obviates a great deal of the toil of writing; for the worst thing in preparing an article for the Press is its re-writing after the first draft has been completed. Having scribbled off your article, then carefully revised it, the typewriter is certainly a boon and a

blessing when it comes to preparing the final draft for despatching to the editor. It is an easy thing to master the manipulation of most of the machines at present on the market, and typewriting is a relief from the continual scratching of the pen or pencil. But if one can afford to employ an amanuensis, or can get a member of his household to assist him by typing his articles, then the typewriter can be made to multiply one's productiveness two or three fold. And, thirdly, the typewriter is an economiser in the matter of postages; for thinner paper can be used, and less space is occupied than in handwriting.

When preparing an article either in manuscript or typewriting, place invariably at the top of the first page, above the title, your name and address, thus :—

From J. Wellington Jones,
2, Little Cash Street,
Tinkletown.

And, if you follow my advice as to the protecting pages at the beginning and the end, you will write the title of your article, the number of words, and your name and address on the front outside page, or type these in this manner :—

THE SEARCH
FOR THE
NORTH POLE.

(2500 words).

J. WELLINGTON JONES,
2, LITTLE CASH STREET,
TINKLETOWN.

A very good idea, and one not generally known, is to write your article in an ordinary penny pass-book.

For short stories this is especially recommended to those whose caligraphy is good enough to do without the aid of the typewriter. It is easy for editors to glance through a contribution so written, and the batters of the book keep the inner pages in good condition, while there is no danger of any leaves going astray.

When separate sheets are used—and except in the case of a contribution written in a notebook separate leaves should always be used, because they are much more convenient for flipping over as they are read by the editor—care should be taken to fasten them securely at the top left-hand corner. The ordinary paper fastener is as good as anything for this purpose; although a few stitches of worsted will serve as well, and avert such a catastrophe as a fit of bad temper in the editorial sanctum, caused by one of the brass points of a paper fastener pricking an editorial finger.

MSS. should invariably be sent flat, or folded as little as possible; but never, never rolled. Never under any circumstances roll a manuscript. Nothing is more irritating than the task of reading a pile of writings that has been rolled until it curls up like a snail every moment the hand is relaxed from the bottom of the sheet. Besides, a roll in going through the post runs the risk of being damaged when the date stamp is applied.

It is well to write with sufficient space between the lines to leave room for corrections or slight additions; but one should always aim at having one's manuscript as free from interlineations as possible, and never to make any additions or emendations

unless these are really necessary to the completeness and effect of the whole.

And, finally, need it be said that under no conceivable circumstances must one write on both sides of the paper? Those unacquainted with practical Press work are, perhaps, at a loss to understand the stereotyped regulation "Contributions must be written on one side of the paper only," but it admits of a very simple explanation. It often happens that in distributing the "copy" of an article to the compositors to set up in type, a single page has to be cut into two or more pieces and given to as many different men. This would, obviously, lead to endless confusion if there were writing on both sides, and hence the rule—from which there is no deviation in any newspaper office. It is also easier to read an article written on one side of the paper only, and it is easier to write straight ahead than it would be to fill one side of the paper and then the other. So that even in this, the last rule for preparing a manuscript, it will be seen the economy of the Press provides for the editor, the contributor, and the compositor alike!

CHAPTER IX.

"PLACING" A MANUSCRIPT.

Not the least important factor in the success of a literary contributor is the discrimination that tells one which are the likeliest publications to accept an article that the writer has just completed and prepared for despatch to probable purchasers. Indeed, we might almost say that this is the most important question of all. There lies an interesting article, well written and neatly prepared, quite an acceptable manuscript, in fact; but unless it is brought to the attention of the editor who is wanting just such an article, all these excellent qualities shall count for naught. This may seem too obvious a point to call for exposition; but there is not an editor in the land who will not tell you that the greatest failing with all young contributors is their surprising lack of discrimination in choosing their market. Mr. Max Pemberton, who is now one of our most successful novelists and editor of *Cassell's Magazine*, confesses that in his early days he wrote a short story of a semi-historical nature, dealing with the French Revolution, and running to about five thousand words, and this he sent to *Temple Bar*, for which, of course, it was utterly unsuited; and after seriously thinking of committing it to the flames, when it came back

"declined with thanks," he decided to try *Chambers's Journal*, which accepted the story immediately.

While few will take such an optimistic view as Mr. John Hollingshead, who says, "What one editor rejects, another is bound to take; what one publisher spurns, another is bound to print and circulate," it is a fact that the great mass of manuscripts which are returned week by week to their writers by the editors to whom they have been submitted are rejected because of no intrinsic faults, but because they are unsuited to the editors' respective requirements. It is no uncommon thing for an editor of a religious journal to receive the manuscript of a sensational story, "bluggy" enough to suit the taste of the immortal Toddy, though eminently calculated to shock the readers of a religious publication; yet this story submitted to the editor of a periodical which made a feature of sensational fiction would very probably meet with acceptance. And, on the other hand, it is quite as common for articles dealing with such themes as "The Foundations of Belief" to be sent to editors of popular papers and journals of light literature.

When a traveller, representing a firm whose business is the supplying of machinery oils, makes his calls upon possible customers, he does not visit lawyers' offices and endeavour to force the cashiers into buying some of his machinery oil for book-keeping purposes; nor does the traveller for inks call at engineering works and strive to sell some ink for oiling machinery. Anybody who did either of these things would be looked upon as a harmless but irritating lunatic. Yet there are young writers

doing things as stupid every day, and using hard words about the editors who refuse to buy articles for which they have no possible use.

A constant study of current periodicals must be made by all would-be contributors who desire to have a minimum of disappointment in their work; for it should be understood that when a man succeeds it is not because his literary style has so greatly improved, not because his capacity for dealing with a given subject has been widened, but largely on account of his having arrived at a better knowledge of editorial requirements through studying the contents of the periodicals of the day. And, moreover, it is not only necessary to keep in touch with the periodical press as a whole, but to regularly watch the columns of such journals as one thinks he can write for with acceptance. The reason for this constant watchfulness lies in the danger of submitting to an editor an article on a subject which may have been recently treated in his paper, and thus making it almost necessary for him to return the manuscript. By so following any particular journal the young writer will at once see which subjects to avoid in submitting a contribution to its editor, and will also receive suggestions for fresh subjects in those that have been treated in its columns. The present writer learned this from bitter experience; but profiting thereby he eventually saved himself much disappointment by settling three points before sending any manuscript away: first, that nothing on the same subject has appeared for at least six months in the journal to which the article is being submitted; second, that the subject is likely to interest the editor and

readers of the said journal; and third, that it is within a score or two words of the average length of the articles published in that journal. If every contributor paid attention to these simple rules countless postage stamps would be saved, editorial labour would be lightened, and a great deal of disappointment avoided.

A good plan when writing an article is to have in view several papers for which it might be suitable, and so guard against introducing anything into it which might disqualify it with any of these possible customers. And when sending a manuscript on its rounds to these papers, invariably start with the one which pays the best. The wisdom of this was forcibly borne in upon me some years ago, when I wrote an article and sent it to a certain periodical which would not have paid more than a guinea had it accepted the proferred manuscript, but it declined it, and I then forwarded it to *Leisure Hour*, where it was published and paid for at three times that figure. It is a sound business principle to offer your wares in the first place to those who will pay the highest in the event of their purchasing them, and only to try those that pay less liberally after the first class have refused to accept. But with the young writer there should be other considerations than the immediate amount of remuneration, and perhaps the greatest of these is to gain admittance to the columns of a journal which publishes signed contributions. To the beginner who is not dependent for his living on the earnings of his pen, the advantage of having his name attached to any articles which he publishes is worth guineas in the end. It may be said that many

such articles are scarcely likely to secure their writers any degree of reputation, and to some extent this may be true; but, on the whole, it can be said with truth that what an editor thinks worth publishing and paying for an author need not be afraid to sign. And if there be any credit attaching to an article the writer ought to reap the benefit of it. Anonymous journalism does not induce writers to put their best into their work, and there can be no doubt that where it is the custom to sign articles a better literary standard is attained.

The manner in which one approaches an editor has also a good deal to do with early successes. As a general rule the novice goes about this business in the clumsiest manner possible. Some time ago the editor of an important American magazine published some samples of the letters he had received offering him contributions. They were pretty much on a par with those that are sent to editors on this side the Atlantic, and several may be quoted as typical.

Here is the plea of simplicity—

Will you put these few lines in your magazine? It would please me very much to see them in print.

The plea of poverty—

I hope you will give the story the most favourable hearing possible, for I am a poor woman, and can ill afford to lose the time I have put into it.

The plea of ambition—

Please deal justly with me, as I have only a short time to live, and a great many stories to write.

The plea of relations—

I send you an original sonnet. My sister, whose literary taste is excellent, considers the lines possessed of unusual merit. I trust you may regard them in the same favourable light.

Another style is something like this—

I have been a reader of your paper from the first, and consider it one of the finest publications of its kind in the world; indeed, I would not miss an issue for a great deal. I enclose herewith an article on a subject which I am sure will interest your readers, and I may state that there are a large number of my friends in this town who would be especially pleased to see it in your columns.

This last is a very common style in which silly young people send the firstlings of their pens to editors; and it is morally certain that no self-respecting editor ever looked at any manuscript so proffered. Think for a moment of the impertinence of telling an editor what will suit his readers, and the reason why such a plea is ineffectual is at once apparent. The plea of poverty is even better; but all such attempts to influence editorial opinion are vain, for they are in every case the outcome of pride, egotism, or selfishness—what could be more selfish than to ask an editor to publish a worthless article simply because its writer is hard up?—and the only thing that can sway the mind of an editor is the manuscript itself.

The editor of the *Windsor Magazine* says that "the letters which accompany manuscripts are nearly always needless," but he prints the following as a business-like specimen—all too rare—which came to him printed in bold black type:

Dear Sir,—I beg to submit the enclosed MS. for Your kind consideration. If accepted for insertion in Your pages, I shall

be pleased to receive payment at the usual rate. Should the MS. be unsuitable, Postage for its return is enclosed.—I am, Yours, etc.

I think this is a very sensible way of sending out a manuscript (though the capital Y is too flattering); but where the article has been written with a certain paper in view, or with two or three possible mediums in view, it is quite legitimate to mention that fact in such a way as this:

DEAR SIR,—Herewith I beg to enclose for your kind consideration an article entitled, so and so, which I have written in the hope that it may be suitable for your columns. Stamped and directed envelope enclosed for return of MS. in case it should not prove available.—I am, yours, etc.

This is short and to the point, and ought to suffice for all ordinary cases; though all that is necessary in sending a contribution to an editor who has previously accepted some work from the same pen is to enclose an ordinary visiting or professional card with, "Trusting enclosed article on, so and so, may be acceptable for (name of journal)," or words to that effect, written across the back.

But in cases where the article has been written under special circumstances, with a view to some approaching event or celebration, or where information of an exclusive nature is set forth, it is always desirable to draw the editor's attention to this in the note accompanying the manuscript; but be *brief*, don't waste words on sugary compliments, for editors value these as much as the passer-by values the "God bless you, kind gentleman" of the importunate Irish beggar who hopes for a copper, and when he is

disappointed does not hesitate to implore the Deity to do other than "bless." Then, when one has written a long and important manuscript, the postage on which, both ways, may be an item, it is well to write to the editor of a periodical for which it might be suitable, asking him if you may submit it for his approval. If the subject interests him he will most likely promise to consider the article, and if he does not then accept it there must be some fault in the style or treatment. If the subject does not interest him he will tell you so, and thus save you time and postage stamps, and enable you to write at once to other editors whom it may interest.

It is always a wise plan to enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of the manuscript in case of rejection. There are several reasons for this. In the first place, it is a common thing for a carefully written article, which was neatly folded and scrupulously clean when it left its author's hands, to come back soiled and creased on account of its having been forced into a smaller or differently shaped envelope from that in which it was sent. This can be avoided by always supplying a suitable envelope for its return. In the second place, loose stamps may go amissing, and once they have disappeared the chances of getting an unsuitable contribution returned are reduced to a minimum; and in the third place a stamped and directed envelope expedites the return of a rejected manuscript, for time is always at a premium in editorial sanctums, and the task of addressing envelopes for the return of rejected articles is a particularly unprofitable one to an editor, whereas it is an easy matter to slip such proffered manuscripts

as cannot be accepted into the addressed envelopes provided by their writers and so send them on their homeward journeys with as little delay as possible. It is really a very important point this of enclosing a stamped and directed envelope when sending a manuscript on its rounds, for the good reasons stated, and also because there are many editors who will not undertake to return rejected contributions unless they are accompanied by the necessary envelope, no matter whether the writer has enclosed the requisite number of postage stamps.

While there are many editors who seem to take a fierce delight in pencilling some cabalistic figures on one's unfortunate manuscript, and so making it necessary for the writer to rub them out, or perhaps write the page over again, if young authors will follow the advice I have given, they will have no great difficulty in keeping their pages clean and tidy until some good editor hands them over to his compositors to "set up" for an "early issue." The importance of never sending out a soiled manuscript cannot be overrated. In a delightful little bit of autobiography, descriptive of "An Editor's Sorrows," Dr. Robertson Nicoll, editor of the *British Weekly*, has written: "And oh! good people! dear people, dear ladies in particular, never, never send an editor a filthy manuscript. For one thing, it has no chance whatever. He knows very well that its condition is a proof that it has gone the rounds of his brethren, and he knows that his brethren have sharp eyes and do not pass things readily. Besides that he draws certain inferences, and they pain him. I cannot understand why it is that men very rarely send a

defaced manuscript, while women will without scruple go on addressing and re-addressing a story to editor after editor, until it is actually dropping to pieces, and so filthy that the only fit place for it is the fire."

A good plan for keeping in mind the average size of the articles which appear in various periodicals, and which must guide the sensible contributor in any article he submits to their editors, is to enter in a book the number of words to the column in such periodicals, and the average number of columns given to articles published therein. By doing this, one can tell in a minute or two whether an article one has just finished is the proper length for any given paper, a copy of which may not be at hand. And one may thus guard against discursiveness when brevity is an essential.

It seems to me that the lines here laid down for the guidance of the young writer in the difficult task of "placing" a manuscript are fairly comprehensive, and if they are followed out they ought to result in the beginner meeting with a minimum of disappointment; at all events, they may be described as rules which the present writer has evolved out of his own experience as a contributor and an editor, and as such I venture to think they are not altogether without value.

CHAPTER X.

SOME FURTHER HINTS.

The Value of Foreign Travel

There is nothing of which I am more firmly convinced than the immense value of foreign travel to the journalist. Not so many years ago, when I was in the habit of spending my holidays in the home country, a journalistic friend of mine—long a successful toiler in Fleet Street—assured me that I could make no greater mistake. His holidays were really a most valuable asset; for three weeks spent in France, or Germany, or wherever on the Continent his fancy dictated, supplied him with "copy" to last for a year! This may have been an exaggeration, but I can vouch for the value of foreign holidays as copy-suppliers, and since that time I have myself consistently treated my holidays from the same point of view. No one who has the journalistic eye can spend a week or two in any part of the Continent without coming away with subjects for many articles; and if one has the knack of short-story writing, so much the better; striking backgrounds may thus be obtained and "local colour" introduced with realistic effect. Therefore, I say to all young people who are writing for the Press and have found in this book some counsel which commends it to their respect,

travel as much abroad as you can, make the most of your holidays; the harvest of the journalistic eye in foreign lands is often a golden (guinea) one!

Of course, it is taken for granted that before holidaying abroad one has a fair knowledge of his own country, and is not like the idiot I met in the Alps the other summer. This individual delighted in telling everybody in the hotel that he had been ten times to Switzerland and had never been north of London in his life, although he was a Londoner by birth. The man who has been ten times in Switzerland and is utterly ignorant of the natural beauties of his own land and the life of the great provincial cities is as fine a specimen of the thorough-paced fool as I ever wish to meet.

The Use of Photography.

Illustrated articles are greatly in favour with the magazines and weekly journals just now. Indeed, the tendency of all journalism is toward illustration. A few years back there was much talk of the journalist of the future having to be an artist as well, and young reporters were urged to acquire a knowledge of art work so far as that could be taught. But the camera has curiously belied the prophecies of those who thus counselled us a few years ago; it may now be said that the journalist who can manipulate a hand-camera is quite as well equipped as his brother who is something of an artist—and it is so much easier to press the button and let the camera do the rest!

Look at the *Illustrated London News*, *The Sketch*, *Black and White*, *The West End*, or almost any

of the illustrated weeklies; at any of the monthlies; and you will see that the artist has a very poor show alongside the photographer. It is not necessary to here discuss the bearing of this on the artistic taste of the day: we are dealing with facts, and I have just stated one. The demand of the reader—or the picture-looker—is for "actuality": this the camera supplies better than the pen. Consequently I should advise all who are bombarding the magazines with articles to invest in a good hand camera—there are many useful ones in the market—and become their own illustrators, wherever that is possible.

It is not necessary to go through the drudgery of developing the plates and printing the photos; send your camera with its exposed films or plates to a photographer, and let him do the rest; your time may be more profitably employed writing your article than in fiddling with chemical solutions and such like things. On occasions where the camera work calls for more than ordinary knowledge of the art, when one requires some good views of interiors, for instance; it is best, perhaps, to enlist the services of a professional photographer. Photos which are to be reproduced by means of "half-tone" plates for direct printing in magazines and journals got up in the style of the *Sketch*, *St. Paul's*, and the *Illustrated London News*, must be very good, well toned, and every object clearly defined. For journals printing from stereotyped plates, which require the photos to be re-drawn in open lines by an artist, the photos need not be so highly finished.

When one is submitting photos with an article, it is important to give the editor full information as to

how they have been obtained, and whether they are copyright or not; for many photographers take a delight in letting editors use photos which they have copyrighted, and then coming down on them for substantial solatium. Be careful, therefore, in securing a photo from anyone to illustrate an article of yours, that you make enquiry as to whether it is copyright, and, if so, whether you may use it on condition that the name of the photographer is acknowledged, or what charge he will make for its use. I have had splendid photos taken for half-a-crown apiece, and I have had to pay a guinea for others not one whit better. The average fee demanded for the use of a copyright photo is half a guinea, but many photographers are quite willing to forego a fee providing acknowledgment of their courtesy is made in publishing the picture. A hand-camera will save you a deal of money, however, and prove a most valuable assistant to your pen.

Dictating.

Most of the readers of this volume will not be forced to try this method of producing articles for some time yet. But I am inclined to touch the subject, as I regard it as a very important one to the man or woman who hopes to become a successful journalist. The time comes in the course of most successful journalists' lives when they feel that their pen is sadly unequal to the work of putting into shape a fourth of the ideas that seethe in their brains. Here the art of dictation comes to their aid, and by learning to dictate their words to a stenographer they manage to get through a great deal more work.

Many of our novelists never write a line of their books, except by way of revising the manuscripts, and contrive by means of dictation to produce so much work that people stand aghast at their fecundity and industry. So, too, many newspaper editors manage to attend to the harassing details of their papers, and to turn out a good deal of original matter with the aid of an amanuensis.

Some people are naturally gifted in the way of dictating their thoughts, others have to slowly acquire the art, and others again can never master it. Touching this question, I find my scrap book yields the following interesting note by Dr. Robertson Nicoll :

For a number of years I have been accustomed to dictate everything, and if you once fall into this way you lose the power of writing. If your shorthand writer takes a holiday—a thing which ought to be prevented by every available means—the burden of existence becomes intolerable. The art of dictation is not at all easy to acquire. It will take at least a year. You find for a long time that your dictated copy cannot be used, and you also find that dictation is as slow as writing. But this art may be learned, like other arts, with perseverance, until you can come to dictate nearly as quickly as an average member of Parliament speaks. For elaborate articles one should have a plan and a few catchwords to go on with, and for all dictation you ought to know what you want to say before you begin. The words will then come to you. The effect of dictation is, I think, to make style somewhat clearer and more spirited. Against this is to be set the drawback that you use more words, and tend to diffuseness.

There is one point Dr. Nicoll does not touch, and that is the fact that when you get a dictated article from your amanuensis for revision, you seem to read

it with the eyes of an impersonal critic—it comes to you with a freshness and an interest which you do not experience in revising your own hand-written composition; and consequently you are likely, in correcting it, to give it those finishing touches which might be omitted in an article written by your own hand. Personally speaking, I have found dictation of immense value, nor have I ever experienced any great difficulty in practising it. I have contributed in one week, to my own newspaper, articles to the extent of ten thousand words, not one of which I wrote except by way of revision. This, together with the onerous duties of editing a large weekly newspaper, would not have been possible except by the use of dictation.

I should advise any young men who are beginning to feel their way to success in literary work to practice dictation, in preparation for a time when they may be compelled to such an expedient. In any case, to be able to dictate your thoughts is to possess a valuable asset in the journalistic world of to-day, when so much production is expected of one man. The man who can dictate can look the Demon of Writer's Cramp straight in the eye-balls; a broken arm even is no embarrassment to him! If one has a sister or a younger brother who is a shorthand writer, enlist her or his services: it will be good practice for dictator and stenographer alike. One point of Dr. Nicoll's I don't agree with; he suggests that when you acquire the art of dictation you lose the "power" of writing. This is absurdly wrong, of course; and that is why I have passed it over until now. You lose much of the *inclination* to write, but that is all.

Nor is that a pity. The cyclist loses the inclination to walk. But he does not repine!

When to Write.

This is a point on which it is useless to postulate: each must find out for himself which time of day best suits him (or her); when one is oftenest in the mood for putting pen to paper. The practical journalist has to overcome the habit of working only when the mood fits; for he must be plying his pen with an eye on the clock that tells him when his paper goes to press, and has often to write his hardest when he would fain throw pen and paper to the dogs. With the outside contributor the yoke of "the hour of going to press" does not gall the neck, and one is free to follow one's fancy. The average contributor, who is employed at business during the day, will most naturally choose his evenings for literary work; and although there have been, and are, well-known authors who believe that "the morning hour hath gold," we may venture to say that the great bulk of the world's reading has been, and is still, produced "after dark."

Evening in the study seems to be the natural time; and even "the wee sma' 'oors ayont the twal'" have merits which the noisy daytime does not possess. The quiet of the night is at once an inspiration and a convenience; for few but the ready journalist can turn out "copy" with noise and distraction around them. This, perhaps, applies more particularly to the town resident; as in some quiet country house, far removed from the city's din, one may be as undisturbed at high noon as in the city after it is bedded.

To write with nothing more disturbing than the drone of bees and the call of birds in one's ears, and the sweet smells of the country garden stealing in at the open window is, after all, better than the midnight oil in a city study. But circumstances and inclination must be the determining forces in this matter, and each scribbler left to his own resources.

Submitting a MS.

I have dealt very fully with this subject in the chapter on "Placing a Manuscript," but I received from a contributor to my own paper the other day two or three bundles of "copy" in a way that I considered very sensible and business-like, and worth noting. The articles were not type-written, but they were prepared on the lines I have advised; instead of a letter drawing my attention to their abounding merits or belauding my valuable paper, each article bore a card pinned with a paper fastener, containing these words in neat printing: "If this article is not suitable, the editor will oblige by returning the same at his earliest convenience to——" here the name and address, properly spaced out, followed. There was very little danger of that writer's articles being lost.

Another point in submitting a contribution: never, *never*, use notepaper on which you have printed your name and described yourself as a journalist or author, with a list of your famous works. No real journalist or author ever parades his profession on his notepaper; and editors invariably set those who do this down for presumptuous amateurs. Recently I received a long MS. of a story from an individual who had his memo form printed like a ham and egg merchant's,

describing himself as "Journalist, Author, and Dramatist," enumerating his stories, articles, and dramas, and offering, if I am not mistaken, to supply these on the shortest notice, and in all varieties. Judge of my surprise to find that this individual "required no payment"; if I used his precious story "a few copies of the paper would suffice." But I did not accept his tempting offer, and as he sent no postage stamps for the return of his MS. it went into my waste-basket, whence it had vanished into the unknown, when, later, he wrote for its return.

Always use private notepaper, unless you are already employed on a newspaper, when the use of official paper is a kind of introduction to an editor; but for Heaven's sake do not label yourself as a journalist or author, or both!

When the Literary Market is Brisk.

Here is an important consideration for the writer for the Press. To know at what seasons of the year editors are especially open for outside contributions is to know something of real value. A few words on this subject will therefore be profitable to my readers. Pursuing our order of dividing the Press, let us first deal with the dailies—morning and evening. Every daily paper is more or less political, generally "more." Therefore, when the Talking Shop of the Nation, otherwise dignified with the name of Imperial Parliament, is in session, the daily Press is so largely given over to reporting its debates, and paragraphing its obscure celebrities, that the space for outside contributions is greatly curtailed. Consequently many an article not of actually topical interest is declined

by editors when Parliament is in session, but which, during the so-called "dead" season, would probably be accepted. Moral: send your articles of general interest round the dailies when Parliament is happily shut, and learn to view the end of each session with a feeling of real delight.

So far as the weeklies are concerned, they are not thus affected by the periodical eruptions of the political volcano, and may be regarded as affording an open market all the year round; this applying to weekly newspapers and the "popular" weeklies alike. As for the monthly magazines, one important thing to bear in mind is the fact that they go to press so long in advance of publication that contributors must look a great way ahead in writing articles for them. Thus, supposing you have a good idea for a spring article, you must write that early in the winter, or probably in the summer, and be content to wait nine months for its appearance, while you must do your winter articles in the spring time; and no Christmas article or story stands much chance of acceptance after the merry month of May. In this way one will always have a floating balance, so to say, of accepted articles in the hands of magazine editors, while pegging away at work which may not see the light of type for another year.

Duplicating.

By this I mean sending copies of one MS. to more than one editor at the same time. It is a somewhat risky system; but I must confess that I have found it an effective one, and do not see why it should be objected to. That it is disliked by some editors is seen in the fact that *Tit-Bits* for a time published a

notice stating that any contributor who was found to have sent a copy to another editor of a MS. which had also been sent to *Tit-Bits* would be permanently struck off their list of contributors. How many poor scribblers have come under this terrible ban I do not know; but this I do know, that *Tit-Bits* used to be (whatever it may be now) the most dilatory and uncertain of London periodicals in its treatment of contributors. I have had an article of no pressing importance used in its columns a fortnight after it was received, and handsomely paid for withal; and I have had, not once, but several times, articles of immediate and transitory interest, which I could have "placed" for certain in any one of a dozen publications, kept by *Tit-Bits* for *three months*, and then returned disfigured with the blue pencilling of the sub-editor. And this, mark you, despite the fact that I had made a special appeal to have the MS. returned immediately if not available, as I had another market for it. Conduct like this is well calculated to drive contributors to the device of duplicating.

Only to-day, as I write this, one of the contributors to the weekly which I edit informs me that he has had an article of his, now lying in my MS. basket, accepted by a London journal, and asks me to destroy the copy in my possession. Though I have only had the MS. two weeks I do not grumble at this; he is perfectly justified in getting his work sold as soon as possible, and there is no reason why he should await my convenience when he has found another editor ready to accept an article that I have not had time to read. Still, I do not advise one to resort much to this method in the case of weeklies, lest by some mis-

chance two publications appeared the same day with the same article. It was an occurrence of this nature, I fancy, that roused the ire of the editor of *Tit-Bits*, and it is a danger to be carefully guarded against; for thus might a struggling contributor get into the black books of two editors at one stroke!

But in the case of monthlies I have found duplicating very successful, and there is little or no danger of clashing. Send out two copies of your article at the same time, and immediately one is accepted write to the editor holding the other and ask him to return it or destroy it, as another magazine has accepted it. This suggests to the editor a certain amount of independence on the part of the contributor, and if the more dilatory editor is sorry that a more alert brother has snapped up, before his very nose as it were, an interesting article, he will be more ready to give early attention to the next MS. submitted by the same writer.

By thus duplicating MSS. it is possible to place a magazine article in much less time than by relying on submitting a single copy to one editor; and, I must say that, speaking both as an editor and a contributor, I fail to see wherein the practice is to be condemned, so far as monthly publications are concerned; or in the case of weeklies, when a contributor meets with an editor who is in no hurry either to use or return his MSS.

How to Avoid Writer's Cramp.

Here is a little scrap which I find in my commonplace book; it may interest my readers, and I may say that I have tested the value of the advice

given with satisfactory results:—No one, it is said, will suffer from writer's cramp who will exhibit sufficient courage to ignore the established methods of holding the pen or pencil, and, instead of using the two front fingers and thumb, place the pen between the first and second fingers, and use the others for a rest. It is most convenient to write a back-handed or upright hand in this way, but with a little practice almost any kind of style can be adopted. The intense strain on the muscles of the two first fingers and the sympathetic nerves in the hand and arm is thus removed, and when a man is absolutely exhausted by the old method he can start again in this way with unlimited energy, and entirely refreshed.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW IT PAYS.

This seems to be a most fascinating topic with "writers for the press," and it is strange to me why so many articles referring to it find their way into the periodicals; for the general reader is surely not interested to know what remuneration the magazines give to their writers. It is a subject on which more nonsense has been written than any other that might be named. The silly stories about the fabulous prices paid to front-rank authors are generally concocted by men who know nothing about the facts. Yet, what shall we say of such a well-informed journalist as Dr. Robertson Nicoll wanting us to believe that a series of eight short stories brings Rudyard Kipling the acceptable sum of £8000? Dr. Nicoll might have placed alongside of this interesting information a statement of the *fact* that hard-working journalists who contribute to the paper he edits so brilliantly are rewarded at the magnificent rate of ten shillings per column of about a thousand words. This is as near Grubb Street prices as any poor scribbler will care to go; and yet it is strange that we find "A Man of Kent" continually chattering about the big prices that present day writers can obtain.

The fact is, much that is written about journalistic remuneration places the rewards of journalism and

literature either absurdly high or absurdly low. Mr. Stead is credited with saying that it takes a journalist of great ability to earn £5 a week, while I remember a contributor to the "popular" press asserting that "anyone" could make £400 a year by occasional contributions; whereas I find an anonymous writer in the *National Review* saying: "There may be, perhaps, some twenty or thirty people in England who make £200 a year by magazine writing; their names are well-known to the public, and are a safe 'draw'; while outside there is the large army of magazine contributors whose earnings average, say from £20 to £50 a year; hardly enough, indeed, to keep body and soul together."

Now, my experience, which, although I am not yet a greybeard, has been fairly extensive, does not bear out any one of those assertions. I know I am only stating facts when I say that there are hundreds of very ordinary reporters, men of no marked literary ability, but good shorthand writers and clever news-gathers, making considerably more than Mr. Stead's five pounds a week; and there must be some scores of men making much more than £200 a year by magazine-writing. As I write I have a letter on my desk, received the other day from a young journalistic friend in London, formerly a sub-editor on a staff of which I was the literary chief, who threw up his post and went to London as a free lance: he tells me that in one week he has earned £23, and during a year has averaged £500, this allowing for a good spell of holiday on the Continent. He has done very little, however, for the monthly magazines, directing his energies mainly to the popular weekly press.

But, bear in mind, I do not suggest for one moment that the inexperienced youth can take chambers in Chancery-lane, write his "copy," send it out, and realise such an income straight away. The young man I mention was a trained journalist of seven or eight years' good provincial experience. Let me give another case. Again a smart young sub-editor and a former colleague of mine; about twenty-one years of age. He tried *Tit-Bits* with an article, it was accepted; another followed, with equally good result. Then all his spare time was spent at a type-writer; articles were produced by the score, and found ready publication in *Tit-Bits*, *Answers*, *Pearson's*, and other popular weeklies, with occasional contributions in the monthlies. While sub-editing at £2 per week he must have made during one year not less than £200. Then came an offer of a situation from one of the papers that took a great deal of his matter, and he went to London at a salary of £300, which he was able to augment considerably by outside work. Neither my own experience, nor either of those cases, nor many another I could mention, tallies with Mr. Stead's five pounds or the *National Review's* pittance.

There is no doubt whatever in my mind that journalistic work is becoming more and more remunerative and the field is rapidly widening. I cannot say I admire all the stuff published in the *Royal Magazine*, the *Harmsworth*, *Pearson's*, the *Windsor*, or any of the popular weeklies; but I think it is very gratifying to see that "big names" are not sought after by them, with the result that the capable writer of average ability has a chance of earning a good

living, and that the enormous sums alleged to have been paid to authors who have enjoyed a "boom"—sums which Dr. Nicoll loves to roll beneath his tongue like sweet morsels—will begin to dwindle, and the money which editors have at their command become more widely diffused amongst literary workers.

To come to particulars of remuneration; let us start with the monthlies. Such as the *Strand, Pearson's,* the *Gentleman's, Pall Mall,* and most of the first-class magazines have no set rate of pay; but reward according to the merit of the story or article. Ten guineas for a short story by an unknown writer (though these are not very often used) is what the *Strand* pays; and a similar reward is generally forthcoming for an interesting article dealing with some curious facts, the writer of which may be a complete novice for all the editor cares, so long as his matter interests. The *Cornhill* gives a guinea a page (one of the smallest magazine pages); *Leisure Hour* pays fairly well, but reserves the absolute copyright of everything it publishes—I have received £3 for an article of about two pages in it. *Macmillan's,* for which a very high literary standard is required, gives £1 1*s.* per page; and so does the *English Illustrated,* which is now largely given over to short complete tales. The *Sunday at Home* is the same as *Leisure Hour,* only the articles are more of the "goody good" description. The *Nineteenth Century* gives £1 1*s.* a page and upwards; but young, unknown writers need not waste time trying its editor with their wares: he believes in "names," generally gets these—and often nothing else. The *Quiver*

is run on the same lines financially as *Cassell's*, which pays a pound a page; but only articles and stories of a religious kind are required. The *Sunday Magazine*, in my own experience, averages slightly more than a guinea a page; while the *Temple Magazine*, the *Young Man*, and *Young Woman* pay from three to five guineas for articles and stories, and—praise be to Mr. F. A. Atkins—the two last named pay *on acceptance*. I have no note of what the *Woman at Home* may pay, but if it is like the *British Weekly*, with which it is associated, it won't be princely. *Temple Bar* will give £5 for a short article; and *Good Words*, being a companion periodical to the *Sunday Magazine*, pays the same as the latter. The *Royal Magazine* is more generous than any of its higher-priced contemporaries, for it gives £2 2*s*. a page—excellent pay, indeed; and the *Harmsworth*, I believe, will pay about the same. The *Argosy* is good for half-a-guinea a page (small); and *Atalanta*, the girl's magazine, about fifteen shillings a page. *Chambers's Journal* pays half-a-guinea a column for ordinary contributions; while the *Boy's Own Paper* and the *Girl's Own* reward their writers, I am told, with a sovereign for a page of three long and closely-set columns—very poor pay, indeed.

The weekly papers whose rates are most stable are such as *Tit-Bits* and *Answers*. Both of these give a guinea a column of about 1000 words; but both of them have special rates for exceptionally interesting articles, *Tit-Bits* printing such on its "Premium Page" at two guineas per column, and *Answers* rewarding one article each week with a special fee of £5. *Cassell's Saturday Journal*, and the *Golden*

Penny, a guinea a column. *Pearson's Weekly* gives £2 2*s.* a column, larger than any of the above. The *Graphic*, *Illustrated London News*, *Sketch*, and other illustrated weeklies pay well, the last named having given this humble scribe as much as £3 3*s.* a thousand words, which is really good pay, and would bring a man a modest competence if he could dispose of all his wares at that figure. The *Athenæum* pays well, a guinea for a short article of about 250 words; the *Queen*, a guinea or a guinea and a half a column, the *Lady*, the *Gentlewoman*, and *Lady's Pictorial*, half a guinea, and *Vanity Fair* will give from two to ten guineas a column according to the exclusiveness of the information. An article in the *Spectator* or the *Saturday Review* means about five guineas for the fortunate author.

Then we have the dailies. The *Daily Mail* and the halfpenny mornings are good for a guinea and a half a column; the *Daily News* two guineas a column, and that may be taken as the average of the morning penny papers; though if one should achieve the glory of an article "by a correspondent" in the *Times*, a cheque for ten guineas or perhaps fifteen will be the exceeding great reward thereof. A front page article in the *Evening Standard* brings its writer two guineas, but, as I know from experience, you have to wait a long time, perhaps three months, between its sending and its publication. A *Globe* turnover is only thought worth a guinea, but it generally appears in about a fortnight after acceptance; the *Echo* gives a guinea an article; the *Westminster* a guinea and a half a column, and the *St. James's Gazette* the same; the *Pall Mall Gazette* giving an average of £2 2*s.* per

column. Paragraphs, and very brief articles are paid at "lineage rates," a penny, penny farthing, three-halfpence, or more per line—the *World's* rate being sixpence per line.

The Provincial papers of standing pay much the same as their London contemporaries: the *Glasgow Herald*, which uses several "specials" every week, £2 2*s*. a column, as deponent knoweth to his profit. A guinea a column would perhaps be the average taking the provincial papers one with another; in some cases more, in others less.

Having condescended upon this data, which, of course, is only set down here as indicating the prevailing rates of remuneration, and with no attempt at completeness, a few further words are necessary before we take leave of the subject. If one's desire is to secure a reputation as a periodical writer, the magazines are the things to cultivate; for weekly work is largely anonymous. But the magazines to the beginner mean weary waiting; nine months, a year, even two years being the time that often elapses between the acceptance of an article and its appearance. With the weeklies, if one has the capacity, the returns are quicker, and more money can be made out of them, while they require a less exacting literary standard; but success therein brings you nothing but lucre, and that, after all, is not everything.

"THE DIARY OF A LITERARY BEGINNER."

UNDER the above title a correspondent of the *Weekly Sun* contributed to the "Postbag" of that paper (then under the editorship of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.), on March 14, 1897, a short article giving an account of his first year's experience as a literary free-lance. The article struck me as so honest, and fell so much into line with my own initial efforts, that I clipped it out, and now reproduce it as a tonic for the young journalist who has followed me thus far in my tale of advice and experience :—

I am writing this article in no vainglorious, no egotistical spirit; but since, undoubtedly, a considerable number of regular subscribers to the *Weekly Sun* have been, in the first instance, attracted towards it by that popular feature, the "Postbag" column, I think the brief recital of the first year's experiences of one who had the good fortune to seek counsel in that direction, and find it, may not prove uninteresting to a large section of readers. I will begin by stating that, like ninety-nine out of a hundred other journalistic aspirants, I was totally unconnected either by birth or friendship with any member of the profession I was desirous of entering. I found that I should have to start as a free-lance, as one without any regular newspaper employment, whose unsolicited arrows have to be shot at venture into editorial sanctums. It may be asked, Why was I so desirous of entering the lists in what is a proverbially irregular and uncertain profession? Well, I had friends at the Bar, who while waiting for briefs appeared to do little beyond consuming heavy luncheons at Fleet-street restaurants; I had friends on the Stock

Exchange whose prospects could hardly be considered more brilliant. Then an incident occurred which made my mind up for me. An evening paper, in reporting a certain technical subject with which I happen to be well acquainted, perpetrated some errors in its figures. I wrote to point it out, at the same time giving some additional information. Greatly to my astonishment and delight the MS. appeared, not in the form of an unpaid contribution, a letter to the editor, but as a short article. A friend to whom I showed the cutting remarked, "You will get at least three pounds for that, I expect." Ultimately I got 8*s.* 6*d.* Still it was a beginning, however modest, and from the date the cashier of the ——— *Gazette* presented me with his compliments, and begged to enclose remittance due, &c. The year just passed was my first year of real work as an irresponsible *littérateur*, and it was during the month of January that I first submitted a MS., accompanied by a published cutting from the *Globe*, for the inspection and advice of the "Postbag" editor. The criticism, which followed in due course, was, on the whole, encouraging. In plain words, I was told that, although it was very evident I did not possess the knack of story-writing, yet, by sticking to carefully-selected up-to-date subjects, I should always "stand the chance of publication." I destroyed my stories that same Sunday night, set myself forthwith to turn out articles only, and probably for a beginner the result may be considered as satisfactory. Turning to my MSS. lists, I find that I wrote altogether 134 articles, of which 78 were accepted, leaving a balance of 56. Of the accepted contributions, 43 got home at the first trial, 18 at the second, ten at the third, eight at the fourth, one at the fifth, two at the sixth, and one at the seventh. It is evident from this that my pertinacity cannot bear comparison with that of a gentleman who lately confided his experiences to the *Author*, who had a contribution taken at the forty-ninth time of asking! As it may be of interest to add some particulars as to where the lucky ones found a home, I may mention that all were published in London journals or periodicals, panning out as follows:—Twelve in morning penny papers; two in morning halfpenny papers, thirty-seven in evening penny papers, one in a Sunday journal, fourteen in penny weekly papers, ten in sixpenny weekly

journals, and two in monthly magazines. The average length of the articles may be taken at 1000 words; there was only one big fish among them, of 6000 words. For quite four months that favourite composition lay in the hands of the editor of a well-known half-a-crown review, during two months of which it was actually in type; then back it came like a boomerang, accompanied by a courteous and considerate note to the effect that the uncertainty as to what the morrow might bring forth militated against the immediate decision which, losing patience, I demanded. As to the fifty-six unsuccessful essays, twenty of these were destroyed as being out-of-date or wanting in merit; ten were accepted but not published, and are therefore carried over to this year; while seven miscarried in the post or were waste-paper-basketed. A great deal is said about the behaviour of editors to their outside contributors. If my experience may be permitted to go for anything, I am convinced there must be exaggeration somewhere. I can honestly declare it is my firm belief that every MS. submitted was read and tested entirely upon its merits. From the mercenary point of view the result if not startling, was satisfactory, and this year, with increased connection, the writer has every hope of far surpassing his first year's efforts. I submit this diary to Postbagites because I think it proves that even on the lower rungs of the journalistic ladder there is a competence to be made by hard work, imperviousness to rejections, joined to the knack of seizing upon opportunities as they present themselves. Here, with my kindest regards to the "Postbag" editor, who first put me on the right track, I conclude my diary.

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